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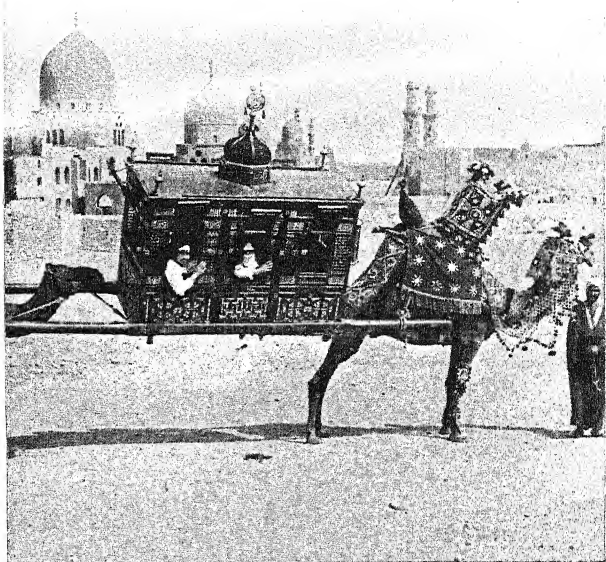
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A SHIP OF THE DESERT OUTSIDE CAIRO.

The ladies are out for an airing ; they are passing the tombs of bygone
Moslem rulers.

THINGS SEEN IN EGYPT

BY

E. L. BUTCHER

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF EGYPT," &c., &c.

WITH FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

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TO
MY HUSBAND

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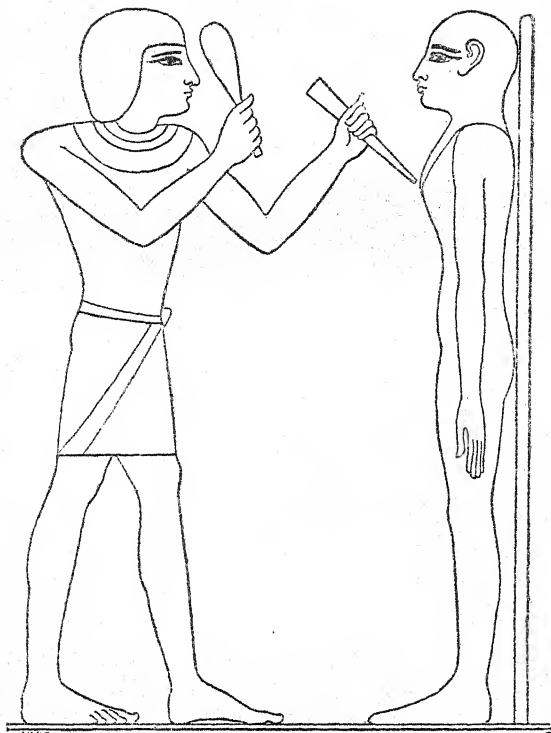
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CARVING A STATUE.

Things Seen in Egypt

CHAPTER I

A LAND OF LIGHT

EGYPT has been aptly called the Land of Paradox, a country full of charming contradictions, of bewildering surprises, of grim tragedy, and farcical humour which reminds one of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas. But, looking at the outer aspect of the country, we may say that Egypt is pre-eminently a land of light. One does not realize at first how much the charm of Egyptian scenery depends on the transparent sunlight which we are now doing so much to destroy with the fogs and smoke of Western civilization. A tourist who for the first time thunders across the Delta in his corridor express on a winter day may find little beauty in the long monotonous lines of the mud-coloured plain with patches of dull green crops. But the sun shines out, and straightway the whole scene is transformed. The little canals shine like ribbons of silver on the purple earth, the field of half-grown clover becomes a shimmer of

Things Seen in Egypt

translucent emerald, and the little children, in their nondescript robes of red and yellow and pink, come out like butterflies to join their blue-shirted fathers or their black-veiled mothers. The low range of sandhills in the distance assumes indescribable shades of pink and saffron in the transforming light, and the far-off grove of palms grows blue by contrast. The white dome of a Sheikh's tomb shines out from among the piled-up hovels of a native village, and a wheeling flock of pigeons becomes a moving constellation of stars in the blue depth of the sky. A long string of camels pace the neighbouring "gisr," or raised bank, with their usual air of supercilious indifference as the noisy innovation rushes by.

At first sight there does not seem to be much change here in the last half-century. In spite of steam-pumps and Western machinery, one still sees everywhere the shadoof or the sakeer at work when the Nile has gone down and the water needs to be raised to the level of the fields. The sakeer is at work the whole year round, but many of the shadoofs are only used when the Nile is very low. Then you may see a tier of three or four one above another, each worked by a man or two men, who in summer are often without any clothing at all, except an almost invisible loin-cloth. They pull the rope down between them and toss the basket or bucket of water into the reservoir above them, whence it is taken in the same way by the man above them. The sakeer is



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THE FIRST PYRAMID EVER CONSTRUCTED.

This picture also shows one of the earliest of man's occupations. These gaunt sheep find some pasture near the adjoining village of Sakkara.



A Land of Light

a heavy cogged wheel, generally of sycamore-wood, to which a cow or bullock is harnessed, with a cloth bound over his eyes to keep him in the circle. The cog-wheel turns another at right angles which has earthen jars bound upon it, and this goes down into the water, bringing the jars up full and sending down the empty ones. Some of these sakeers are made to serve also as rough sundials. Pieces of wood are set in the ground round the circle, and as the shadow moves it marks the hour for the peasants in the neighbourhood.

The ancient Egyptian year was divided not into four seasons, but three—the time of the inundation or Nile flood, the time of sowing, and the time of reaping. Under the English engineers the Nile is being brought gradually under control, as it used to be in the days of the Pharaohs. Soon, it is said, basin irrigation will be a thing of the past, but one of the most picturesque aspects of Egypt will go with it. Visitors are rarely early enough to see the beautiful expanse of water which turns so much of the country round Cairo and elsewhere into a vast lake. The villages—all, it will be noticed, built on slightly rising ground—rise like so many islands out of the water, and flat-bottomed, heavily laden boats ply between them. It is one of the most beautiful times in the year, especially when the whole western sky glows with the deep pure red of an Egyptian autumn sunset, and is reflected on the waveless world of water. Then you may go to Sakhara without trouble, or the

Things Seen in Egypt

necessity for donkey-boys. You may step into the boat at Bedreshayn, and glide noiselessly over the open lake and through the groves of palm-trees, standing knee-deep in the water, disturbing only the herons from the tiny islets where they stand sentinel, and land in the desert within a walk of the Tombs.

But in the Turkish days the uncontrolled flood sometimes did much damage; an extra rise of a few feet spelt ruin and disaster everywhere. I remember such a flood shortly after I went to Egypt in which no fewer than 5,000 people are said to have been drowned in the different villages which were overflowed. In the same year the road to the Pyramids was washed away, and there were thirteen accidents to the telegraph-lines *from boats sailing over them!*

The ordinary cargo boat on the Nile is very like the boats used on the Lake of Geneva, a clumsy but very picturesque object. A boat laden with tibbin (chopped straw) is like a floating stack, for boards are put across the boat which project on either side and almost hide her from sight. On this the stack is built with the most marvellous regularity, as if cut by a knife, and no wind seems able to disturb its outline.

When the floods are gone and the Nile shrinks lower and lower in its bed, then you understand how Egypt got its name of El Khemi, or the Black Land—the Land of Ham, as it is written in the Authorized Version. The saturated soil is a

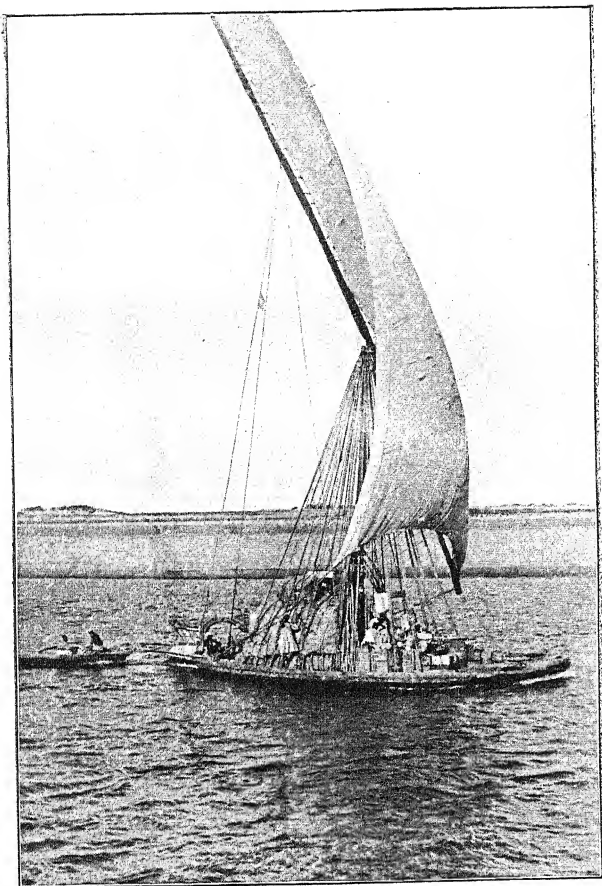
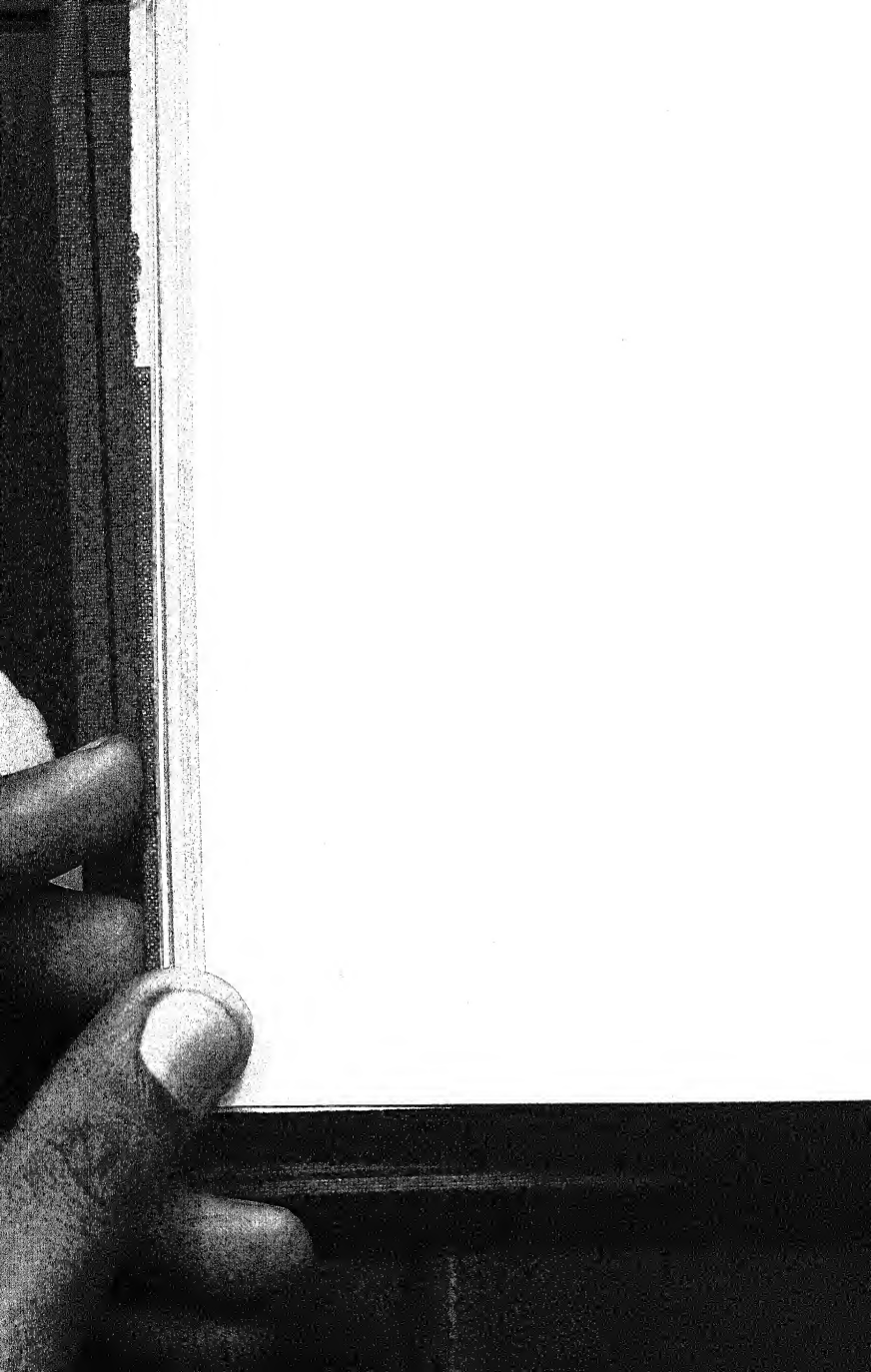


Photo by Will R. Rose.

Chester.

A NATIVE CARGO-BOAT ON THE BLUE NILE.

The "nuggar" is constantly to be seen often laden to the gunwale, and its rigging looking not unlike a cage.



A Land of Light

deep purple black, and on this, before the water is really quite gone, the sower goes forth to sow his seed. Before many days have passed a faint green tinge spreads over the black, and suddenly, as it seems, the whole country is a vivid green, which the sun turns to gold and perridot. The rapid growth of everything is wonderful. I have seen land from which the man in charge solemnly assured me that he had taken seven crops in fifteen months—five of clover, one of sugar-cane, and one of something else, which I have forgotten. As the river shrinks lower still, and the banks of the Nile are revealed, the thrifty Egyptian sows melon-seed down to the water's lowest edge, for this is a crop that can be harvested long before the sloping banks will be covered again by the rising water. There are several kinds of melons in Egypt; the best is the shammam, but the commonest is the batikh, or water-melon, with its hard green rind and rose-coloured inside. The Egyptians say that open-air bathing should begin when the water-melon comes in. Some natives use it as a charm to drive away ants from their houses. They cut a piece out of the first melon brought into the house and suspend it in a corner. It is believed that this will effectually drive away the ants. "Written on the leaf of the water-melon" is a proverbial expression for anything widely known.

When the Nile is at its lowest comes the harvest, when a casual observer might think the

Things Seen in Egypt

peasant takes his work very leisurely. But if he sleeps a good deal of the day, it is because for quite half the month the moon gives him light enough to work under more comfortable conditions. And after that the land is at its ugliest : long stretches of bare earth, which the sun is rapidly pulverizing to dust ; wide reaches of desert sand shimmering white in the noonday sun. Still, at evening the clouds of sunlit dust make beautiful effects as the flocks of mingled sheep and goats follow their shepherd to the village along the bank. These raised banks are the only roads over the greater part of Egypt, and on one side there is generally a canal, which is dry for three or four months of the year.

There are beautiful trees and gardens in Egypt, but there are few wild-flowers ; in fact, I think there are people who would be tempted to say "There are none," and so pass on. For the Valley of the Nile is a fertile country, which has been carefully cultivated for centuries, and is too valuable to waste in banks or hedgerows, where unprofitable flowers might be allowed to flourish. To the ordinary traveller the land must appear alike without boundaries or hedgerows. It is true that almost the only wild-flowers which have not been eliminated are of two kinds—those which grow in the desert, and those which, in spite of constant dredging and drought, continue to flourish in the canals.

Of the two classes, the former are much the

A Land of Light

more numerous. The low sand-dunes of the northern coast, which look so desolate in the sweep of winter winds or in the scorching glare of late summer, wake to life with each returning spring, and clothe themselves with a veil of beauty. Here are poppies—not the pale scarlet of our cornfields—but blood-red against the azure sea, and so full of sunlight that their petals seem transparent. Here is the waxen blossom of the Star of Bethlehem, and that field of cloth of gold is a mass of yellow daisies—or should one rather call them wild marigolds?

As you ride out eastward along the coast you come to one tiny oasis after another, set like enamelled jewels in the golden desert. Often the water which has worked the miracle and caused the desert to blossom is not visible; you only know it has been there by the blessing it has left. Here you must get down and go on your knees fully to appreciate the workmanship of the fairy carpet underneath the palms. The flowers are all on a miniature scale—marigolds the size of pimpernels; mignonette that needs a microscope to reveal its dainty perfection; stocks about the size of forget-me-nots, which yet manage to give out as much fragrance as their giant sisters of the garden. Almost all the common flowers of English cottage gardens are here in miniature, and many more with names known only to the learned.

In the inland deserts this is not the case: the

Things Seen in Egypt

flowers have no familiarity to English eyes, and are generally far less beautiful, though doubtless more valuable from a scientific point of view. I have seen a large table filled by Professor Schweinfurth with masses of desert flowers of different kinds, mostly of subdued colouring, and all with names longer than themselves. These came from the lonely valleys in the stony hills beyond Helouan.

Towards the west of Alexandria, beyond the stone-quarries of Mex, the flowers grow thickly and are larger in size. Here are the purple bells of the grape-hyacinth, and the pale lilac of a kind of sea-lavender. One may gather about forty varieties in a morning's walk, but it is very difficult to learn the names of most of them. Here, too, straight out of the sand, by the blue ripples of the sea, grows one of the most beautiful wild-flowers of Egypt—the white amaryllis. Its delicate white flowers seem almost as much out of place by the seashore as a lady in white satin building sand-castles, and yet this is so truly its home that the commonest name for it is the Mex lily.

Near this native village the desert has been made to blossom in a more practical fashion. Potatoes and tomatoes are two of the vegetables most in demand now in Egypt, and the natives, always on the alert for any agricultural opportunity, soon discovered that they could be grown in sand far more profitably than the spare and

A Land of Light

stunted barley which they had been accustomed to raise in patches. But this barren reach of coast is a prey to all the winds of heaven, and the ordinary native shelter of reeds was found insufficient. So they set to work and dug long sandpits, like giant furrows, some 3 or 4 feet wide, from east to west along the desert. At the bottom of these pits the crops now thrive luxuriantly—or did when I was last there to see.

Almost the only exception to these two classes of flowers—the desert and the water—is the Egyptian wild-rose. It has been largely introduced of late years into gardens for hedges, and is sometimes called the Soudan rose.

Grasses and rushes of several kinds grow plentifully in Egypt. There is a silvery grass that trembles in soft masses on the banks like a sunlit wreath of mist; there are bulrushes growing by the salt lakes of the desert. But the commonest and one of the handsomest is the rustling reed which grows along the banks of the canals, and sends up its plumed head to the height of 10 feet to 12 feet; it is like a coarse kind of pampas grass, and one feels that these must have been the reeds to which the barber of King Midas confided his secret long ago. There is a thistle, too, which deserves mention for the beautiful form and marking of its leaves—dark green, with a running pattern of white lines.

But the wild-flowers of the water are far more beautiful than the wild-flowers of the desert.

Things Seen in Egypt

One of these, which has been brought down from the Soudan within the last twenty years, has run so wild in Egyptian waters that already some people find it a nuisance. One of the great ponds in the Gizeh gardens became so choked with it that the elephant had to be requisitioned to clear it out. This is the water hyacinth, a beautiful flower something like a hyacinth, but the flowers are larger, more delicate, and always of the same colour—a delicate lilac deepening into purple at the heart of each floweret. The leaves are deep, bright green, and stand well out of the water, with a globular swelling at the base of the stalk. On some of the reaches of the White Nile this beautiful flower is said to form an important ingredient in the harmful “sudd.” It floats upon the water, its fern-like roots twine together in a thick mass, and in a short time the pond or river seems to disappear.

Then there are three kinds of water-lilies—the common white water-lily which we know so well on English ponds, and two kinds of the old Egyptian lotus. I remember many years ago being shown the blue lotus of ancient Egypt as a great rarity in Kew Gardens, and was told that it had long become extinct in Egypt itself. But it flowers in the canals of the Delta now, as it has flowered year by year for thousands of years, and may be found there by anyone who knows where to look for it. The pale blue colour, pointed petals, and long, upstanding stem may be recog-

A Land of Light

nized at a glance by one familiar with the pictured records of ancient Egypt. It is not, however, so beautiful as the many-petalled floating cup of the common white water-lily, which flowers for miles in the canals along the railway route from Alexandria.

The queen of all Egyptian flowers, however, is the great white lotus, but till the last few years this bloomed only in forgotten corners of Egypt, in waters which washed the feet of those ancient towns where hardly one stone is left upon another. In obedience to an English command, a plant of this royal flower was brought from its splendid seclusion and set for the admiration of all men in a little lake in Gizeh gardens. Here, year by year, when all the tourists have gone and Egypt is most lovely, this glorious creature rises out of the water like Venus from the sea, and each year flowers in greater profusion, till now hardly a glimpse of the water can be seen in summer, only the great green leaves like serried shields set close together, and above them, on stems as straight as the columns which they suggested to the men of old, the white lotus opens her chalices of pearl.

I know few more beautiful sights in Egypt than this, but only those can see it whose lot is cast in Cairo from the end of May to the end of August. The lotus grows now in other places within reach, but this comparatively secluded spot in the fields is where she best loves to hold her court. The beautiful heads stand up erect to the brilliant sun-

Things Seen in Egypt

shine in countless hundreds above the cool green leaves, which are themselves some 2 feet out of the water. Round the pond there is a growth of low wood, where the black and white kingfisher loves to come in the summer evening, now motionless on the drooping branches, now hovering with butterfly flight over the glimpse of open water between the lilies. When the long, stifling day is drawing to its close, and work in the dusty streets is over, it is a constant delight to seek the shelter of the plane-trees on the edge of this quiet water, and linger in the cool green silence to watch the dying sunlight fade from off the queenly flowers.

CHAPTER II

HOME LIFE

THE domestic life of the Egyptian is outwardly much the same, whether he is Christian or Moslem. This is chiefly because centuries of oppression have taught the Copt to conform in all indifferent matters to the customs of his conquerors. With regard to the mass of the population, however, it must not be forgotten that the real difference between Copt and Moslem is one not of race, but of religion. The Moslem represents the Egyptians whose forefathers, to escape persecution, renounced the Christian faith for that of their conquerors ; adopting also their speech and even their very name, for the Moslems are generally called Arabs in Egypt, though there are hardly any real Arabs in the country. The Christians, who have kept their old name of Egyptian, though disguised out of all recognition (Copt), were first left in a minority in the land after the wholesale slaughter of Christians which followed on the last great revolt of the Egyptians against the Arabs (*circa* A.D. 830). Every persecu-

Things Seen in Egypt

tion since that date has still further lessened their numbers by death or apostasy, and in the course of centuries they have adopted not the faith, but the customs and speech, of their conquerors in order to elude observation as much as possible. But they rightly claim that they are the truest representatives of the ancient Egyptians, since they have been careful to retain purity of race by marriage. As, however, in common parlance, the Egyptians take the names of the two different races, the Moslems calling themselves Arabs and the Christians Copts—which has come to signify *Christian* Egyptians—it will be more convenient to the general reader if we do the same.

One of the customs common to both which has come down to them probably from pre-Christian times is connected with their first entrance into the world. I have seen the ceremony performed by Mohammedans, and a young Copt of my acquaintance wrote for me at my request the following account of it as performed in his own house. I give it in his own words :

“Four months ago my sister Sophia brought forth a female child. The seventh day after that of the birth was celebrated by the usual ceremony. On the night preceding it many female visitors came into our house, and we all sat in the drawing-room. Sophia and her baby child were amongst us. A basin full of water was brought and put in the midst of us. In that basin an

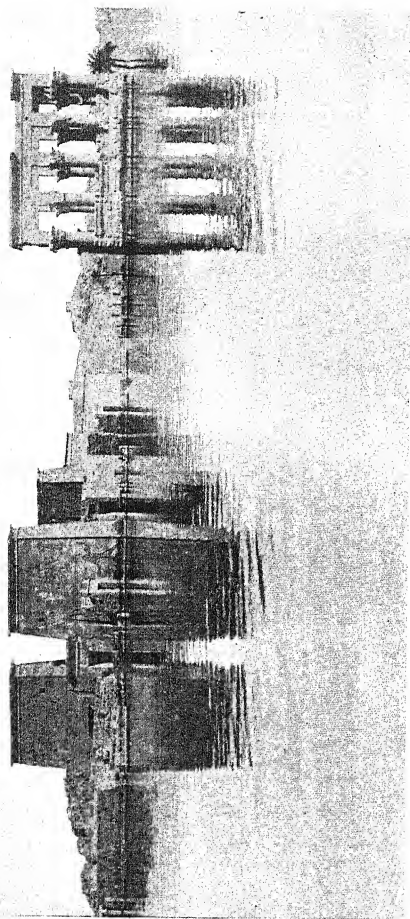
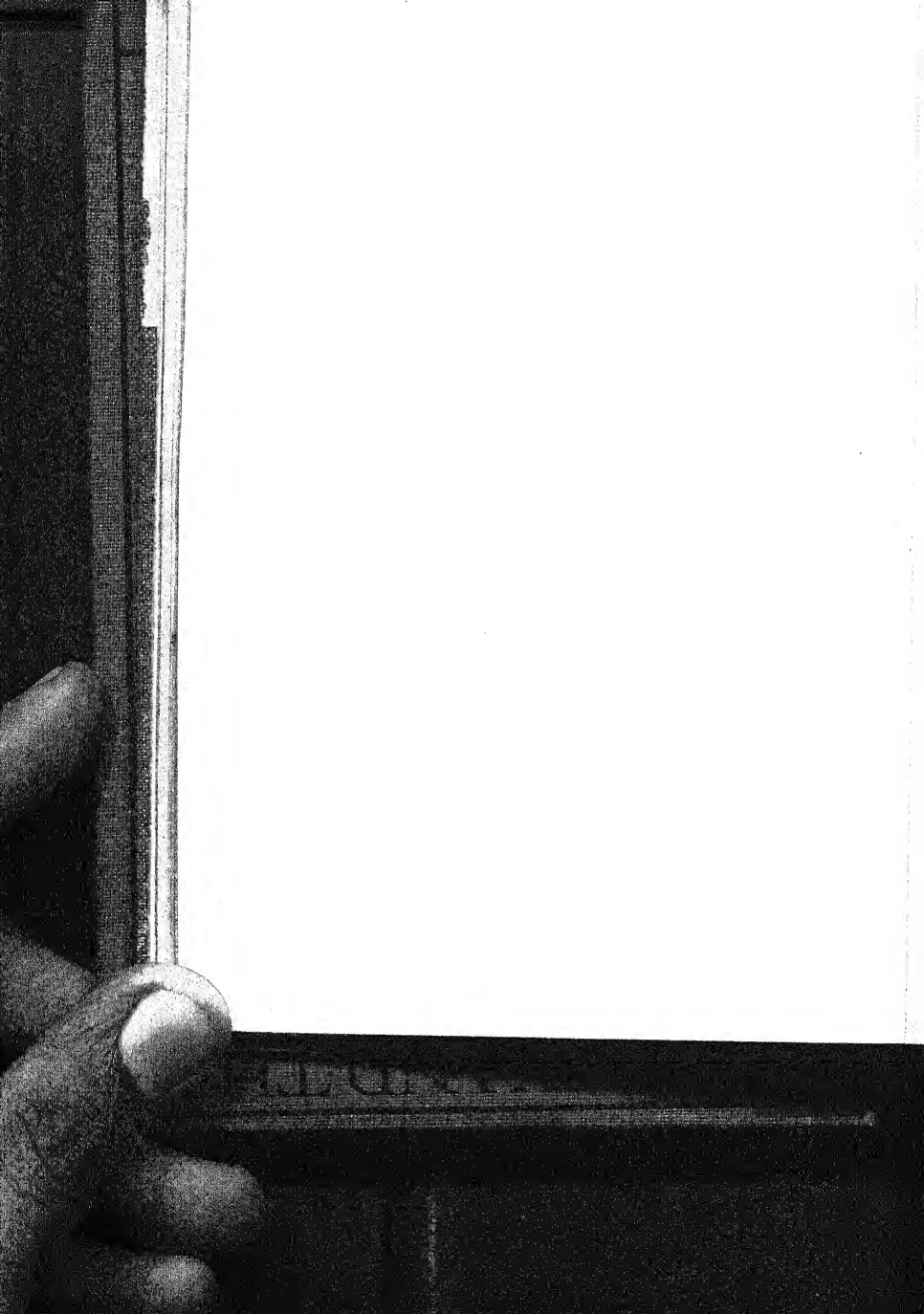


Photo by Will K. Rose.

EVENING AT PHILÆ.

This shows the beautiful Temple of Isis on the far-famed Island of Philæ. The heightening of the dam will submerge much, if not all, that is to be seen in this picture.

Chester.



Home Life

empty goollah¹ decorated with all the jewellery and ornaments of women that were at that time in our possession was placed. The goollah was clothed in a piece of rich silk cut and made to its shape. Beautiful necklaces made of gold, diamond earrings, bracelets, were all hung round its neck. Our women believe that the more richly the goollah is dressed, the more fortunate the child will become. They spare nothing that they are able to lend for the adornment of this goollah. They intend by doing this to woo Fortune to come and smile over the child in its cradle, and when it is in the wide world. The act of dressing the goollah was accompanied by the sound of tom-toms (native drums) and shrill, quavering cries of joy called 'Zaghareet.' Then all people present began to choose a name for the

¹ A goollah is a small porous jar for holding water. When the British troops came to Egypt in 1882, the old harem palace at the citadel was turned into a hospital, and is used as such to this day (1908). Some of the English ladies who lived in Cairo used to go to see the sick soldiers, and various meetings were held, at which we were all asked to suggest alleviations. I mentioned that if they were supplied with water in goollahs it would be much cooler, besides being less expensive than in glass. At first there was a difficulty, because no one present appeared to know what I meant by a goollah. Lady Baring, whose visitors we were, finally produced one from the back regions to explain. Then a very charming young lady rose to improve upon the suggestion. She wished every ward to be supplied with gasometers! Further bewilderment on the part of the assembly! It was eventually discovered that she meant gasogenes.

Things Seen in Egypt

new-born child. We brought three candles of the same material and of equal length, and stuck them to the edge of the basin. We then gave each candle of the three a name which we had, after our long discussion, chosen. At the time of naming the candles my uncle offered a short prayer, after which all of the three candles were lit exactly at the same moment. We then entertained all our friends with a nice supper, as usual on other occasions of festivities. Supper over, we all gathered round the basin, joked and foretold a thousand happy things that were to happen to the child, until the three candles were nearly burnt out. We watched them as they were dying away, and waited with impatience to see which candle would burn longer than the other two, for the name it represented became the child's name. The midwife of the family was present all through the ceremony, and when the name was decided upon she took the goollah, put it upon a tray, and presented it to each of the women, who put their 'nukoot' (money) for her into the tray.

"In the morning the midwife brought the child, wrapped in a handsome shawl, and put it on her knee. Then one of the women present took a brass mortar and struck it repeatedly with the pestle as if pounding, to accustom the child to noise, that it might not be frightened afterwards by the music and other sounds of mirth. After this the child was put into a sieve and shaken,

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it being supposed that this operation is beneficial to its stomach. The mother was then ordered to step seven times over the sieve. Each time she did so the midwife struck the mortar with the pestle once, and addressed the child, saying: 'Don't cry when your mother is busy in cleaning the house;' 'Let her cook easily;' 'Don't trouble her while she is making bread;' 'When she has a hand-work to do, close your eyes and sleep,' and many other valuable commandments and instructions, each sentence being hammered home with a blow upon the mortar. This being done, we began the procession. The object of this procession was to carry the child through all the apartments of the house so as to make its spirit at home in these places. The procession was conducted in this way: The mother bore her child in her arms and stood in the middle. She was then surrounded with women and children, each of whom bore several wax candles, of various colours, cut in two, lighted and stuck into a small lamp, or a paste of henna upon a small round tray. The midwife at the same time carried a grate on her head with fire in it, and walked in front. She sprinkled upon the floor of each room, and threw into the fire some salt, saying as she did this, 'The foul salt be in the eye of the envier!' This ceremony of the sprinkling of salt is considered a preservative, for the child and the mother, from the Evil Eye. On the door of every room that had been visited

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by the procession a cross was painted. The children cried at the top of their voices, saying, 'Thy hands and thy feet, a golden ring in thine ears,' etc. When the procession had completed its round in the house, it came again into the room from which it began. The child, wrapped up and placed on a fine mattress, was shown to each of the women present, who, looking at its face, said, 'In the name of the Cross! In the name of the Father and Son! God give him long life!' and put an embroidered handkerchief, with a gold or silver coin tied up in one of the corners, on the child's head or by its side. The midwife then distributed cakes, dried fruits and sweetmeats, to all of us. Some hazel-nuts had been put in the water of the basin the night before this day; each member of the family kept one of these hazel-nuts in his purse of money to preserve it from being empty. This ceremony is now going out of use, after it has been practised for a long time by nearly all Egyptians, both Copts and Mohammedans. But still we practise it; old customs are still living in our house."¹

¹ Reading Abd-el-Melik's letter, I remember that this ceremony was once performed for the child of an English woman in Egypt. The charming young lady referred to in connection with gasometers married in due course, and after some years she brought forth her firstborn son in her father's house in Egypt. She was so much beloved by the native servants that they broke through their usual reserve, and insisted that their "sitt's" baby must be properly welcomed into the world. They were all Mohammedans, so

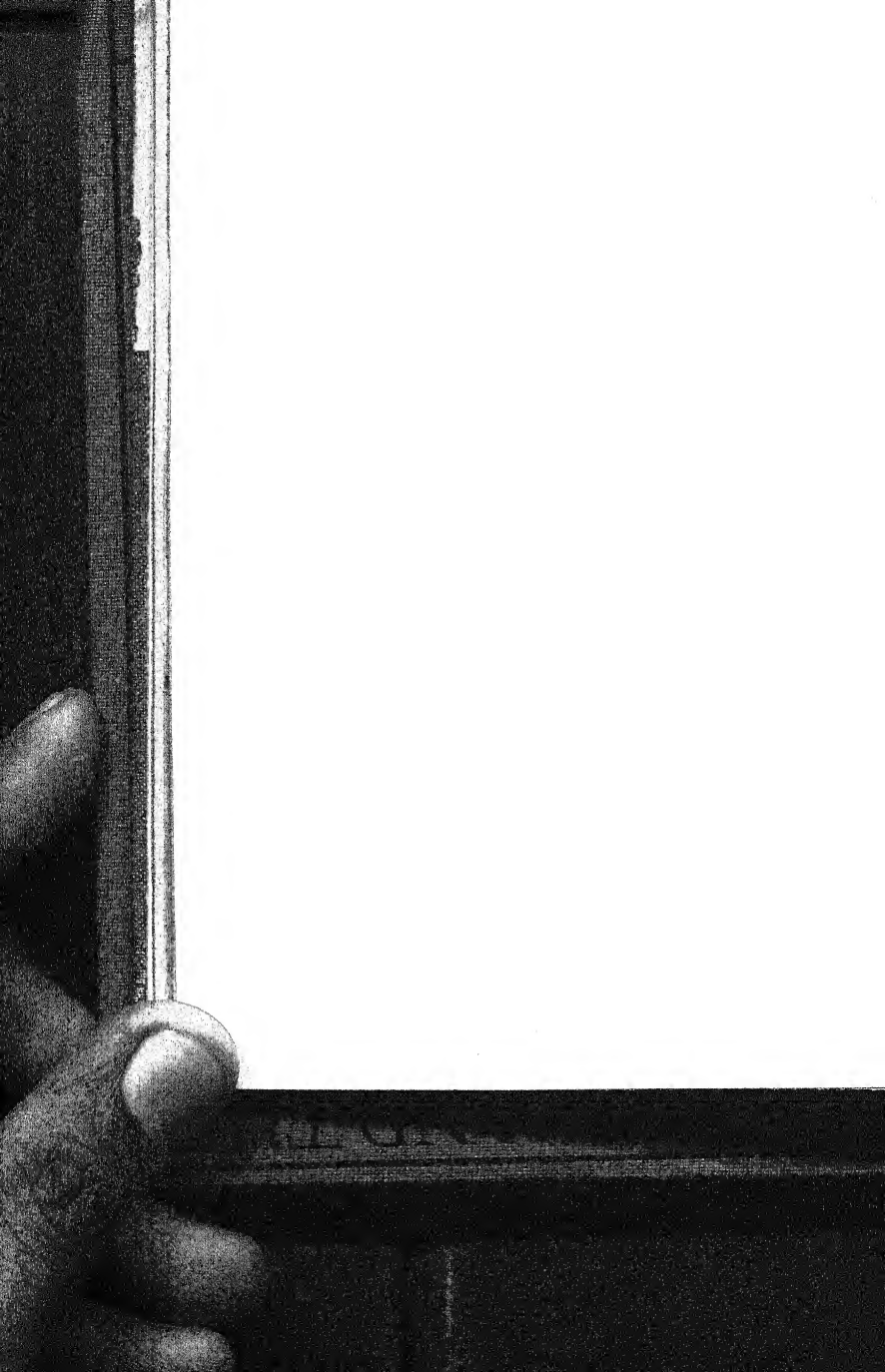


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THE HAREM WINDOWS OF A WEALTHY CAIRENE'S HOUSE.

The outside of the houses of the rich in Cairo give no idea of their interior beauty. This is the courtyard of such a house.



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The Moslem women, as is well known, are never supposed to see any men except their husbands and immediate relations, and are kept strictly to their own apartments, or harem. The Christian women mingle freely with the other members of the household and any man brought into it by the head of the house, who is, however, very careful to whom he extends this privilege. But they are not supposed to speak to visitors, unless invited to do so for some special reason; and the young girls stand till they are bidden to sit down. Slaves are rare in Coptic households—personally I have never seen or heard of one—and less common than they used to be in Moslem ones, as they are becoming difficult to get. It is not uncommon for a rich Moslem lady, generally a Turkish one, to offer to adopt a European girl-child, and provide for her handsomely. But Europeans need to be very careful how they accept such an offer for anyone belonging to them. The child would be kindly treated, but in some cases it would merely mean that a white

that this custom is one of many which has come down alike to Christian and Mohammedan descendants of the ancient Egyptians. But in the case of the Mohammedans it was the men, and not the women, who made the procession. They came into her bedroom at the due time, and the English woman smiled trustfully at them as they bore away the precious babe, and carried it up and down, in and out of every place in the great house with the proper ritual necessary for its happiness in a strange world.

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slave had been acquired for the harem without payment.

The rite of circumcision is of course enjoined as a religious duty among Mohammedans; among the Copts it is sometimes practised as a matter of health, but without any disgusting display or publicity. The wedding ceremonies differ also, as the seclusion of the Moslem women renders necessary. I have often heard Europeans talk of going to a Moslem wedding, but I never yet heard of any outsider except myself and one other woman who had seen the actual ceremony. It is performed in comparative privacy, and none but men are supposed to be present. Two rows of men sit opposite to each other, the bridegroom and his friends on one side, the man who does proxy for the bride, with his companions, on the other. A fiki (schoolmaster) marries the two men, solemnly joining their hands, over which a handkerchief is placed to represent the marriage canopy. The bride is supposed to be somewhere within hearing, and to acknowledge at the critical moment that she accepts the man representing her as her proxy. In the case of a Coptic wedding, the custom, under Moslem dominion, had become something like the Mohammedan usage. The first part of the marriage service would be gone through solemnly with the bridegroom alone, sitting in his wedding garment with an empty chair at his side, while the poor little bride peeped at her own wedding from behind the door. But when that

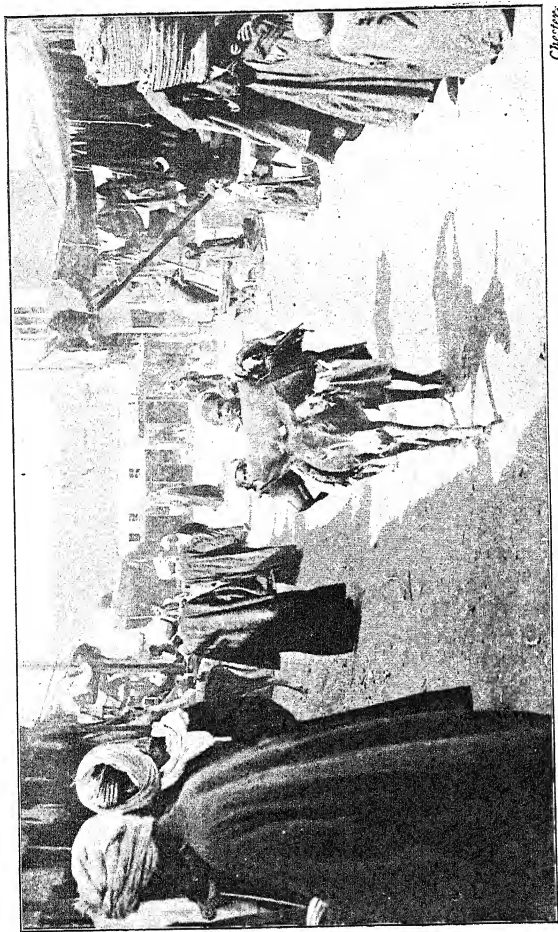
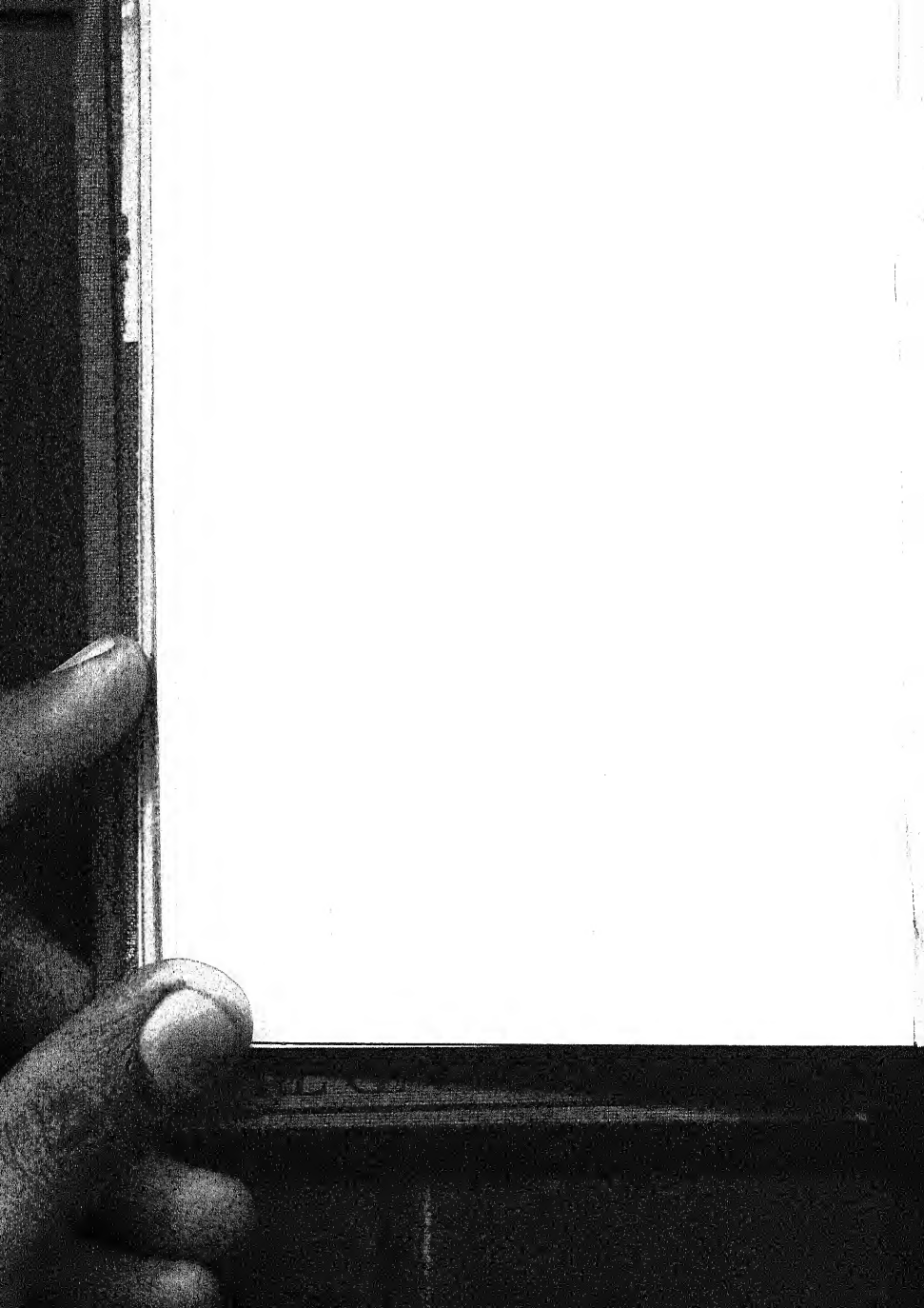


Photo by Will R. Rose.

A STREET SCENE AT ESNEH.

This is the High Street of the provincial capital, and the centre of an important Soudanese trade. The donkey bears a typical water-skin.

Chetov.



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part of the service came for which her responses were necessary, she was solemnly brought in, veiled much like an English bride, but supported, as if she were unable to walk, by a man on either side, and in the rest of the ceremony she took her proper part. Now she is recovering still more of her ancient freedom, with the full consent and encouragement of her mankind. Christian weddings are now often solemnized in the church instead of in the house, as considerations of safety rendered necessary in the old days.

Both Christians and Moslems make the Zeffet el Hamman, or procession of the bath. The bride is dressed in gala attire, and, attended by all her female relations and friends, preceded by a band of musicians. If a Moslem, and unable to afford a carriage, the bride is enveloped in a shawl from head to foot, so completely covered as a rule that she cannot see where she is going, and has to be guided by her friends. The only difference between the two was that, until the English came, the Christians could not venture to make their processions by light of day or with sound of music, but moved through the streets at dead of night, and carrying torches. The second procession is when the bride is taken from her own home to that of the bridegroom. In these days even the poorest people in the large towns try to afford a close carriage for the bride on this occasion; and in the case of a poor Moslem they will combine it, from motives of economy, with the circumcision

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of the small boys of the family. In such a case one or more little boys will be seen gaily attired in an open carriage in the procession, while the bride's carriage is covered entirely with a handsome cashmere shawl. On leaving a Christian bride's house rose-leaves are generally showered over her—a pretty custom, and one which it would be well if we adopted in place of our foolish and often dangerous rice-throwing. But the next ceremony, which takes place at the bridegroom's house, is one which is already falling into disuse among the Christians and some of the better-educated Moslems, and it is to be hoped will shortly become entirely obsolete. It is neither Christian nor Mohammedan, but comes straight down from the pagan religion of ancient Egypt. On arriving at the house, a calf or other ceremonially clean animal is slain before the bride on the threshold, and she has not only to see it done, but to pass in over the running blood.

Little red and white flags are strung across the street or over the entrance to the courtyard where a wedding is being celebrated. If the household is rich and has sufficient space, large tents are erected for the reception of the male guests in front of the house, where they are entertained for at least two, and often for several nights. As in all Eastern "fantasias," the hosts do nothing themselves to entertain their guests: they leave it all to paid musicians and dancers. During the wedding ceremonies of both Copts and Moslems

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there is one night among those dedicated to festivity on which the Egyptian keeps open house in the fullest sense of the word. No one must be refused hospitality. The dragomen in Cairo have presumed on this custom to such an extent—telling the tourists that they can get them invitations to a native wedding, and then taking them in on this night uninvited—that very just and serious offence has been given, particularly as the manners of these intruders from the different hotels and boarding-houses generally leave much to be desired.

At state weddings the guests are assembled in the largest reception-room, and then the bride in full dress makes a sort of progress through the assembly, largesse being scattered among them as she passes. Tiny gold coins are specially minted for this purpose, so light that they resemble a shower of golden petals. The guests are not supposed to scramble for these, but may catch as many as they can; and I have heard that dresses for a state wedding used to be specially made so as to carry away as many as possible of these gold coins in folds and quillings, without necessity for any appearance of eagerness or grasping on the part of the wearer.

Mohammedans, as we all know, are permitted by their religion to have four wives at once; but as in this case each wife can claim her own establishment, attendants, and conjugal rights, they find it cheaper and less trouble to divorce

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their last wife when they are inclined for a new one, and claim credit for having only one wife when their religion allows them more. In any case, the principal wife (generally the first, if the mother of the first-born son) is not often divorced ; she retains her rank and place, whoever else may go and come. Every Mohammedan may divorce his wife whenever he pleases and without any reason given. He has to give her one-third of the dowry he received with her, but that is generally a small sum, and the fate of these discarded wives is often very sad. But public opinion has had a certain influence upon the Egyptian Moslems of late years. I believe that it is now considered rather bad form to divorce your wife, unless you can give some better reason than mere caprice, among the educated Mohammedans. They consider it only just that they should take a second wife when the first has no son, or grows old, or when their profession obliges them to make frequent journeys between two towns, and they need a home in each. But they do not divorce and remarry as often as they used, since they have become more sensitive to the pressure of European opinion on this head.

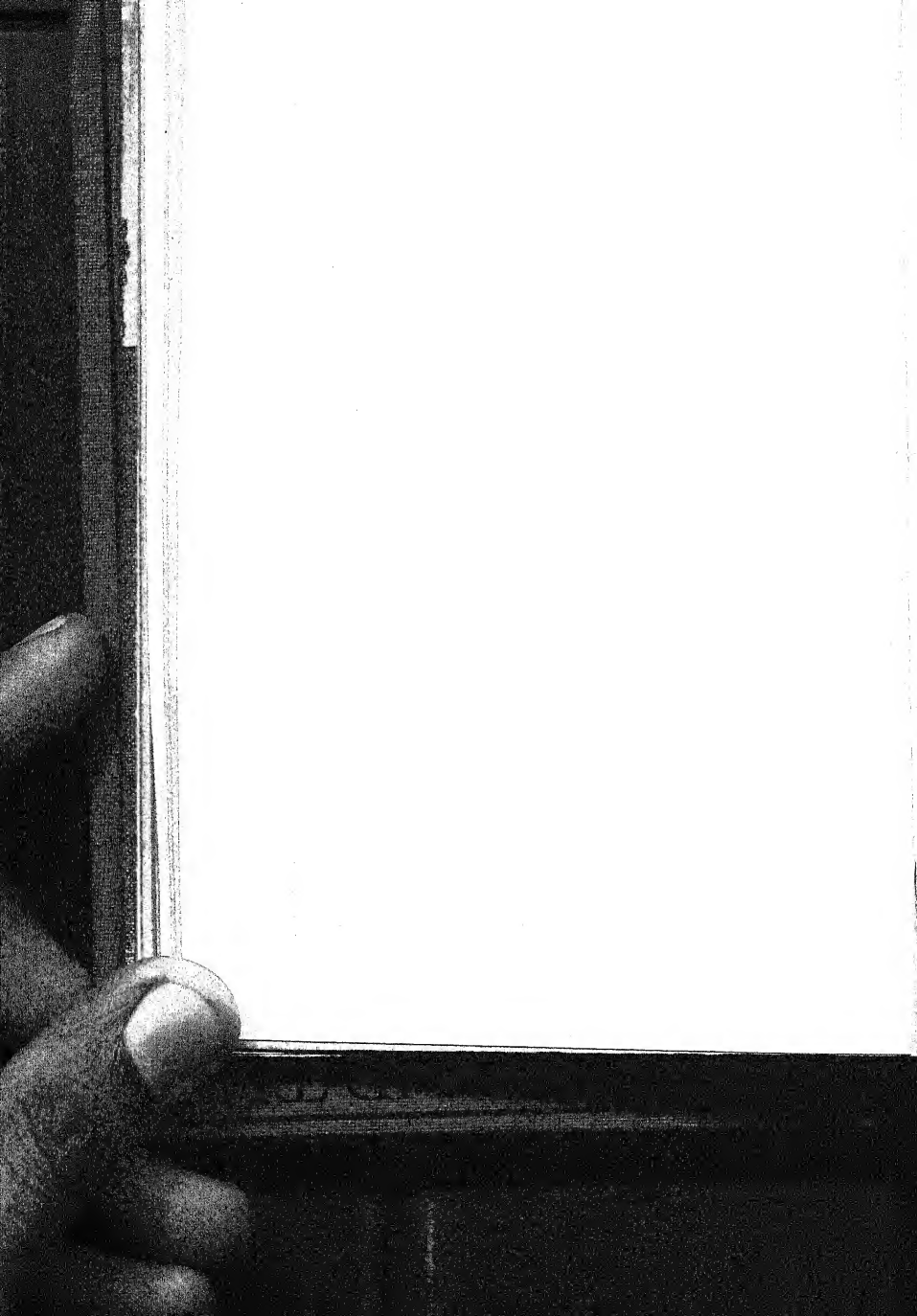
Among the Copts very early marriages are discouraged. Some time ago, as among the Moslems still, fifteen was considered quite a possible age, and twelve for the girls. Now a man must be twenty and a girl sixteen before the Patriarch, or Bishop, will grant the licence, with-



Photo by Will R. Rose.

A STREET SCENE AT LUXOR.

Chester.



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out which no priest can celebrate a marriage. In 1895 the Patriarch issued an encyclical letter to all his clergy, reminding them that, in accordance with the Canons of the Church, young people intending to marry should not only see, but mingle with, each other, so as to know one another well beforehand, and calling upon the priests to ascertain whether there was mutual knowledge and consent to the marriage on the part of both man and woman before the ceremony was performed.

Divorce is very rare among the Copts, and is only granted for adultery. The innocent party may marry again with the permission of his or her Bishop or the Patriarch, but the religious service is slightly different, and the ceremony of crowning is omitted, as it is also for a widow or widower.

The ceremonial observed at funerals is much the same for all Egyptians, whether Christian or Moslem. To note the differences first: The Christians invariably bury in coffins; in the old days they were often of stone, but now are always of wood. The Mohammedans only use a shroud, or, rather, several shrouds. Since the Occupation a case arose in which the Moslems tried to seize a certain piece of ground belonging to a Coptic community. It had once been used as a burial-ground, and the case was decided in favour of the Copts, because sundry excavations proved that all the dead had been buried in coffins. The burial of a corpse must take place within twenty-four hours.

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When the body is being carried to the grave, in the case of a Mohammedan, the usual confession of faith is chanted by the hired singers all the way. In the case of a Christian, of course, hymns and Christian chants are sung.

The Copts are buried in the best of the garments which they have worn in life, and some few jewels are usually buried with them even now, though not to anything like the extent to which this was done in the days of the Pharaohs. Over all the shroud is wrapped, which is often embroidered in gold and silver. If the dead man had been on pilgrimage, the garments that he wore after bathing in the Jordan are preserved to be worn in the grave; if he was not a pilgrim, he wears over his ordinary garments the robe which he put on in life for receiving the Holy Communion. During this ceremony prayers are offered for the departed soul, and incense is burnt in the priest's censers. When all is finished and the body laid in the coffin, a service is held over it, which differs in accordance with the past life of the deceased. Among the Copts this is the only survival of the ancient Egyptian ceremony of testifying for the dead (see Chapter V., p. 139), which the Moslems still observe, but which the Christians have given up. For, as one of them wrote to me in answer to my inquiries:

"We never summon anyone to witness in favour of the departed soul. We believe that it is no business of ours to interfere in the work of

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God, to intervene between Him and man. We believe that the Creator of the soul knows of its well-doing or wickedness better than any creature can do, and judges it righteously without needing our testimony. But the Moslems believe that their witness will weigh in God's judgment of the dead, and will affect it in favour of the souls of their brethren in faith."

The Moslems, in addition to the washing of the corpse, have every aperture of the body plugged with raw cotton by a fiki. Incense is also burnt during this process, and the Koran is read aloud by the other fokaha present. ("Fokaha" is the plural of "fiki," literally schoolmaster, but the literal translation would be somewhat misleading in this connection.) The corpse is then wrapped in six different shrouds, which must be of silk, linen, cotton, and wool, of various patterns. These shrouds are taken off the body at the grave and folded on the floor of the tomb to form a kind of bed, on which the naked corpse reposes.

Instead of the private service of commendatory prayer, the body of the Moslem, if all the rites are properly carried out, is taken to a mosque on the way to the cemetery. The bier is set upon the ground, and the attendants range themselves on either side. Then the Imam comes forward, and, standing at the head of the bier, recites five prayers in a low tone. At the end of each prayer he lifts up his voice, and proclaims aloud: "God

Things Seen in Egypt

is the greatest of all beings." The final prayer may be roughly translated as follows:

"O God, the deceased was Thy servant, and the son of Thy servant. His faith was professed in this confession. I believe that there is no God but God, and I believe that Mohammed is the prophet of God. O God, if he were a well-doer in this world, reward him according to his deeds; if he were an evil-doer, turn thine eyes away from his ill-deeds. Forgive his sins, pardon him for ever, have mercy upon him, purify his soul in the Divine light, make it clean as a white garment washed of all stain. Let his path to Paradise be smooth and safe and broad. Let him be received with welcome by the hosts of heaven."

After this the Imam prostrates himself in solemn silence for a few moments. Then he lifts himself up and looks round about him on the attendants, whom he addresses thus:

"Mohammedans, you are assembled here to bear testimony either for or against this departed soul. Say now what you know of his (or her) vices or virtues, as God hears you and will approve of what you may say."

The attendants all shout in one breath: "He was the greatest good-doer in the world." (They never give any other testimony.)

Then the procession is reformed, and the body is borne shoulder high to the grave. When they reach the place of burial, they chant as follows:

"Peace be upon you, O dwellers in the valley

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of the dead. Death has brought one more into your abiding-place. Here is a new-comer who shall live amongst you for ever. O grave, look not so grim; brighten thy face with a smile; receive this mute clay in a kind embrace. O departed soul, fear not, neither despair. Angels are sent to guide thee on thy path; the Prophet awaits thee at the gate of Paradise. Your faith in Islam will save you from any condemnation or trial. O Day of Judgment, this soul professed the Mohammedan religion; be merciful to him; try him not too hardly."

The end of the recitation is drowned in a burst of lamentation—the shrill, prolonged outcries of Eastern mourning. The tomb is then opened, the corpse is taken from the bier, stripped of its shrouds, and laid in the grave, which is then filled in with stones if possible. Then the Imam comes forward to provide the soul with its final instructions for the dim and dreary shore which it must pass. He says: "When the two angels (see Chapter V., p. 131) come to thee and ask thee, 'Whom dost thou worship? What is thy religion? Who is thy prophet?' say thou, 'I worship God, profess Islam, and my prophet is Mohammed.'" Then the two angels take the soul under their protection.

Both Copts and Moslems are alike in the frenzied demonstrations of grief which they encourage and indulge in on the occasion of a death. The women dye their hands and faces

57 of 57 (one picture has
been removed.)

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with indigo, they rend their garments, and let their hair stream loose and dishevelled. Hired mourners add to the clamour the beat of their tom-toms and the long shrill cries of wailing for the dead. Arrangements for the burial must be made at once, and, if the family is wealthy and important, the funeral procession is as follows :

First of all come the live oxen, or other animals which it is intended to sacrifice at the grave for the benefit of the departed soul, or, as the Christians would say, to be given to the poor. Then come camels, loaded with boxes full of bread for distribution. Next come the fokaha, or, in the Christian procession, the priest, preceded by the sexton carrying a large silver cross,* and choir-boys carrying banners. Boys are hired in the Moslem procession also, though they have no longer any place in religious services, as among the Christians. Then come the censer-bearers, walking in line on either side of the bier, and sending up clouds of incense. These should be robed in white, and sprinkle perfumes also on the procession. Before the bier come the male relatives and friends of the deceased ; after the bier come the wailing women and all the female mourners. Their cries mingle with the chants and hymns of the men in front. The procession, if Moslem, halts at the mosque for the service before

* It is only during the last thirty years that the Copts have ventured to resume the practice of carrying processional crosses at funerals.

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described ; and if Christian, the body is sometimes taken to a church for the first part of the funeral service, which has special reference to the life of the deceased, instead of holding it in the house.

At the grave, instead of the address to the dead chanted by the Moslems, the Christians read passages from the Gospel, offer prayers both for the dead and for the living, and sing hymns, of which a specimen verse may be given :

“Come, then, pure hands, and bear the dead
Who sleeps, or wears the mask of sleep—
Yea, come, who loved him, come to weep
And hear the ritual of the dead.”

But Isis and Nephthys (called Munkar and Nekir by the Moslems) have long been forgotten by the Christians. They leave their dead to the mercy and comprehension of God.

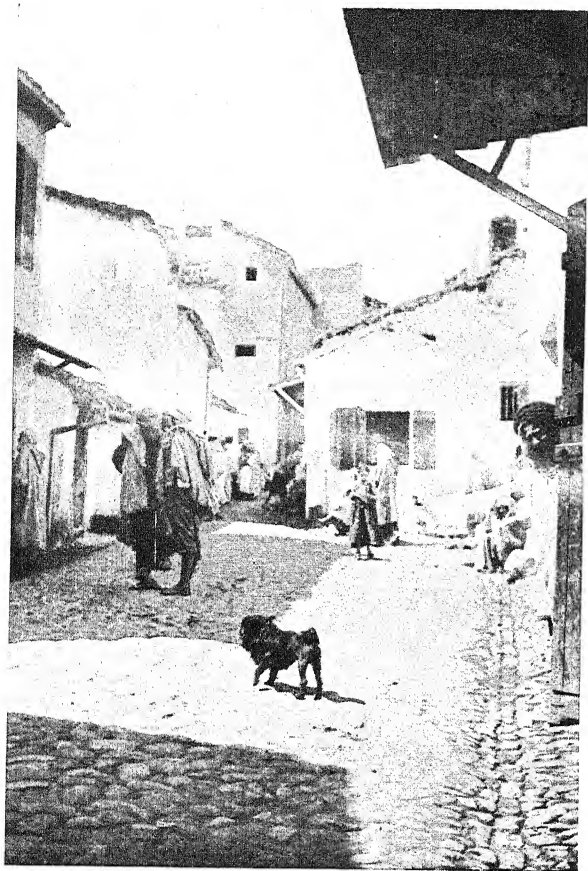
Both Copts and Moslems are subject, of course, to the rule requiring burial within twenty-four hours. But though they can no longer keep their dead above ground, the Copts still keep up the tradition of the forty days after death, during which, in the days of old, the body was being embalmed, and was therefore unburied (see Gen. 1, 2, 3). They believe that the spirit of the dead man or woman cannot enter Paradise until the forty days are fulfilled. After the forty days, during which they mourn and pray for the departed, the priest is called upon to perform the rites which will enable him to leave the

Things Seen in Egypt

neighbourhood of earth and enter Paradise (see Chapter V., p. 128).

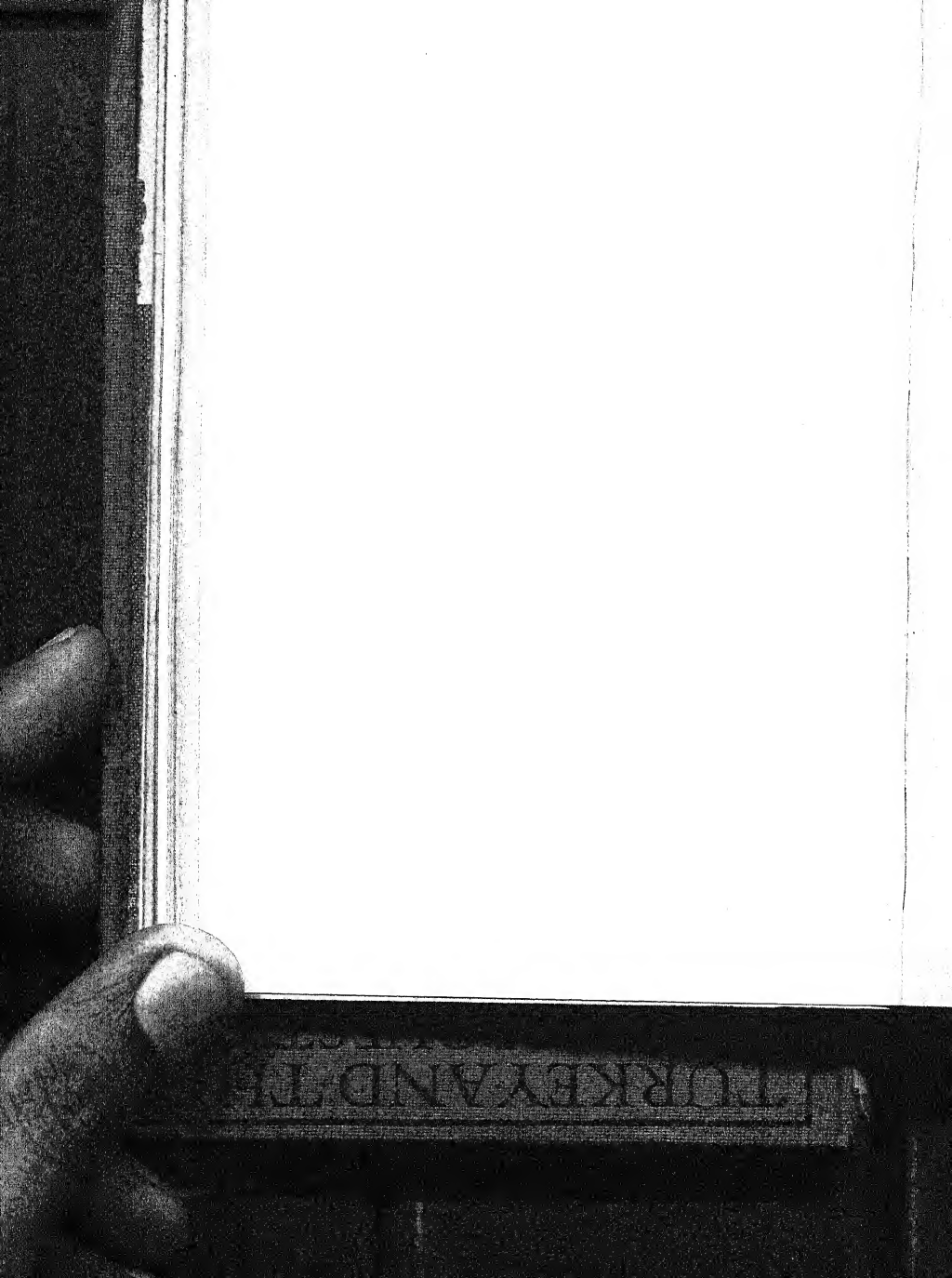
The priest brings holy water, and sprinkles it in every room of the house in which the man died—on his bed, his clothes, and on the mourners. Then he offers up the prayer of release, in which he bids the departed soul a last farewell, and dismisses him in peace to his celestial abode.

From the earliest times of Christianity the custom was continued of visiting the tombs on certain days, as in the religion of ancient Egypt, and those Egyptians who adopted the faith of Islam still continued the same practice. Copt and Mohammedan alike visit their dead in the cemeteries on the eve of their respective festivals. Food is taken and eaten at the tombs of their relations, though probably hardly any of them know that this is a survival from the old pagan religion of Egypt. As the Mohammedans have adopted the lunar calendar of their Arab masters for all religious purposes, it follows that their days for these visits are no longer the same as those of the Copts. But there is one day in the year on which it is proper for all Egyptians to visit their dead which has no reference to any Christian or Moslem festival, and is probably the survival of some ancient Egyptian custom. For the Moslems it is a particular day in Regeb, for the Christians a particular day in Babeh. The Christian observance is probably the nearest to the original time, as they, like their pagan fore-



AN ARAB VILLAGE STREET.

A street in a village of some size. Worthy of notice is the native architecture, also the dog, seldom missing from such a scene, always a scavenger, and often fierce.



TURKEY AND THE

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fathers, go by the solar calendar ; whereas, Regeb being a lunar month, there is no saying at what time of year the commemoration of the dead may fall. Babeh is the second month in the Egyptian year, and corresponds now with parts of October and November. But before we altered our calendar it corresponded with the last days of September and the month of October. The Egyptians, whether Moslem or Christian, can give no reason now for going on this particular day in the year to the tombs, only that it has always been so ; nor do I know with what particular day or festival in the religion of ancient Egypt it should be identified.

Among the wealthier and better-educated Mohammedans in Egypt, the seclusion of the women is not insisted upon *except* in Egypt. You may see a bevy of women arrive at the Cairo railway-station shrouded up to the eyes, and marshalled like prisoners to their carriage by the unfortunate nondescript whose mutilation the system of Moslem "home" life renders necessary. The women must not look at anyone on the platform, far less speak to them ; they are locked into their carriage, and conducted from the carriage to the steamer in the same way. The next morning the same women appear at the public meal in the saloon, unveiled, bareheaded, clad in the latest Parisian travelling fashion, and supplied with the latest thing in steamer-chairs and French novels. They will pose as Europeans

Things Seen in Egypt

the whole time they are away, and act with the same freedom, but when the return steamer lands them once more in Egypt, the same gaolers, the same shrouds, will be waiting for them, and they will arrive in Cairo as they went away.

If you are visiting a lady in a harem with her friends around her, and her husband unexpectedly comes in (generally he sends notice beforehand), you may see the native visitors go down on their knees on the floor, and pull their skirts over their heads, lest the intrusive husband of the lady they are visiting should catch a glimpse of their faces. Indeed, a native woman of the poorest class, wearing little else but one garment, and meeting a European, has been known to draw her garment right over her head, serenely conscious that she has done the correct thing, and perfectly careless of the fact that the greater part of her body was thus exposed.

Now that the purchase of slaves has become both difficult and dangerous under the British occupation, servants have to be engaged and paid. Almost all households—Copts, Moslems and Europeans—employ some Berber servants; many houses are served entirely by Berberin. These Berberin come from Nubia, a large proportion from the neighbourhood of Korosko, and they should, in fact, properly be called Nubians. But it is only another instance of the rule that nothing in Egypt is ever what it is called, and "Nubian" has so long been used for "Negro" that to apply

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it to a Berber would be to give a wrong impression.

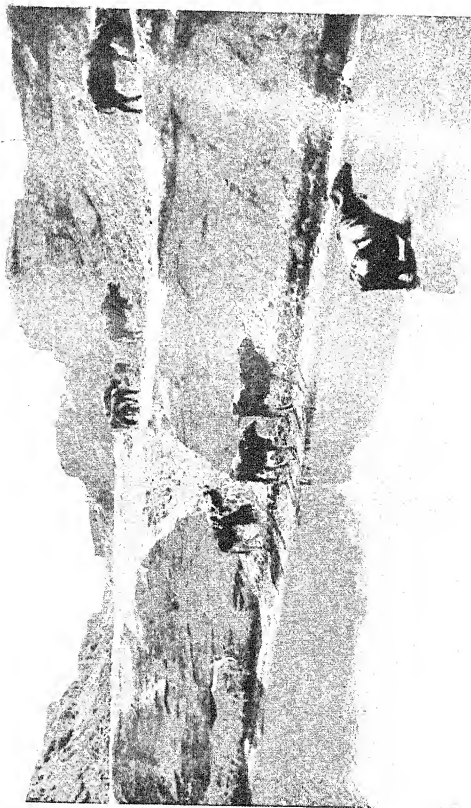
"Berberin" is simply the old Greek "barbarian," which they applied to all the races outside their civilization. This accounts for the fact that perfectly different races lying round the Egypt of the Greek period are called Berbers by European writers. In Egyptian Arabic they are still called Berberin in the plural.

They are remarkable for the fact that of their own accord they have now for more than a century made a practice of leaving their own country to serve for a term of years among strangers. They save every penny, and at the end of five years or so they invest their money in goods for trading, and go back to their own country. Here they live for a year or more on the proceeds, and then, leaving behind them as a rule some small investment in land or houses, return for a fresh term of years. Though hardly any of them can write or read, they maintain a regular correspondence with their friends and relations; they have a sheikh or head of their own in Cairo and other large towns, to whom alone they consider themselves responsible, and they look down on the Egyptians as a race of idlers and stay-at-homes. It is only fair to add that this contempt is reciprocated, and that 'Ya Berber' is as common a term of insult as 'Ya fellah.' They command good wages, and most of them deserve them. When a Berber boy is

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about twelve or fourteen he is sent down, in charge of one of the race who happens to be going, to his father in Cairo. He generally remains in his father's charge for a few months, picking up Arabic, and is then placed in a good European household to learn his trade. They have a natural gift for cooking, and in a few months will learn enough to go as general servant, unless they have a sufficiently good connection to aim at the higher branches of service. When a European pays his cook the wages of a marmiton, it is often the case that the marmiton is an apprentice who has already paid a small premium to the cook to learn of him. The wages probably go as an extra perquisite to the cook, but there is no cheating intended. The apprentice does not consider that he is wronged so long as he is well taught. But if you have been sufficiently long in the country to know their ways, and cannot afford to pay a marmiton, you merely tell your cook so, and if he thinks you are poor and not mean, he will accept the situation contentedly, and you will probably find that he has his marmiton all the same. But if you do not pay for the marmiton, it is etiquette that you should ignore his existence.

These Berberin were all Christians till the destruction of their kingdoms by the Mameluke Sultans of Egypt towards the end of the fourteenth century. After that they gradually became Mohammedan, but the faith of Islam sits lightly



WATER BUFFALOES.

This is a scene often witnessed at midday, when the buffaloes come down to enjoy a bathe and a drink. Notice the brilliance of the reflections.



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upon most of them. They are Mohammedans because their fathers were, but sundry Christian practices linger among them in out-of-the-way places, and they do not trouble even to change the names they have always borne except, oddly enough, when they take service in a European family. If you are curious to inquire, you may find that your Mohammed or Abdul is known in his own country as Junius or Thomas, or some extraordinary name such as Gorgoda or Wuritana. I have heard a Berber call "Basil" after his fellow in the street, but the latter's mistress probably knew him as Ahmed or Ali. They almost always choose to be known by one of those four names—Mohammed, Abdul, Ahmed, or Ali—when they go to service. They find their Mohammedan religion chiefly useful, I think, because it allows them to marry two wives. They are married as a matter of course in their own country, either before they first go down, or, if they are too young then, when they first return to their country. But they do not bring their wives down to Egypt with them, and as soon as they can afford it they marry another in Egypt, and migrate from one home to another. After some years have passed they often get tired of supporting the wife in Nubia, and for a Mohammedan, of course, divorce is easy. They can always marry another when they go back if they wish to do so, but meanwhile the wife of their youth too often receives her dismissal. They are

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very fond, however, of their children. Their language is not in the least like Arabic—I have not been able to ascertain whether it has any resemblance to Coptic—and they are very quick at picking up European languages. They have a good deal of self-respect, and if a European should forget himself so far as to strike his Berber servant, he may not outwardly show any sign of anger, but a mark is henceforth set against the man's house, and no good Berber will serve him afterwards. He will only be able to get those who are in disgrace among their own people because they have taken to drink or hashish, or some other bad habit. A good Berber can be trusted, and will turn his hand to anything that may be required in the house. They are not, however, so well-mannered as the Egyptians.

Outdoor servants are generally Egyptian; the gardener is so invariably. Most of the Pashas still keep a large household, but where in the days before the Occupation there would be about a hundred hangers-on, there are now ten. Since slaves are no longer available, and extortion can no more be openly practised in the provinces, "it is very good for the fellahin, but very bad for the Bashawat," as the ex-servant of a Pasha once said to me.

Until recently hardly any of the Moslem Egyptians could read or write, except those belonging to the trading and official classes and the semi-Europeanized families. The Copts, on the

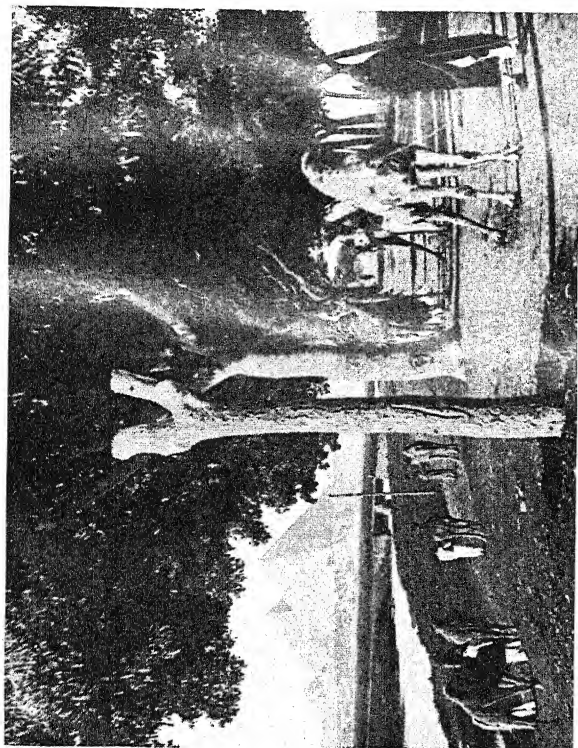
Home Life

other hand, have always had a keen desire for education, and will permit their children to be enrolled as members of any Christian sect or church which will give them the coveted boon, though most of them return afterwards to the church of their fathers. Of late years they have established many good schools of their own, and large numbers of them attend the Government schools, where proper provision has at last been made for them. But it took the English authorities nearly a quarter of a century to realize that the Copts were not only Christians, but Egyptians, and had equal rights in the country with their Moslem brothers.

CHAPTER III

PROVINCIAL LIFE IN EGYPT

ONE of the first things which strikes a new-comer both in the purely native quarters of the town and in the country villages is the ruinous appearance of many of the houses. This is sometimes said to be due to the fact that under Turkish government it is not safe for anyone to appear prosperous, and there is a great deal of truth in the remark ; but in Egypt there is another reason as well. There is a curious superstition, common to both Moslem and Christian Egyptians, which forbids the repair of a house in which the head of the family has died. We may infer that at most periods of Egyptian history this superstition prevailed, for, except in the case of the "heretic" King, no remains have ever been found of a great palace or dwelling-house in Egypt, unless it be in the rare and doubtful cases when the royal palace has formed part of a temple. This seems to have been the case with Queen Tii, or Taia, the ruins of whose palace may still be seen at Thebes. But she was the mother of



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ON THE WAY TO THE PYRAMIDS FROM CAIRO.



Provincial Life in Egypt

the heretic King,* and was supposed by many Egyptologists to be responsible for his short-lived attempt to substitute the Sun God for the great Ammon of Thebes. It may be presumed, therefore, that the Egyptian superstition, whatever it may have been, which made it almost impossible to build palaces or houses that would last, would not weigh heavily on her or on her son. However that may be, her palace, and the palace built later by her son at Tell el Marna, are the only ancient Egyptian dwelling-houses of which any ruins exist in Egypt. Not only the huts of the poorer people, but the royal palaces and houses of the nobility, were built in perishable materials; and an ancient Egyptian would always have been ready to say with the Apostle, "Here we have no continuing city." It is said that, even at the present day in the provinces, when the family is neither poor enough for the usual mud shanty, which may be pulled down and rebuilt in a few days, nor rich enough to possess two houses, the head of the house is sometimes carried outside into the field to die in order that the house may be safe. As far as I can gather, the ideally correct proceeding is that, after the death, every movable article of furniture should be carried away, and the house

* Amenôthes, or Amenhotep, who took the name of Koniatonu, or Khuenaten. All these names vary in spelling according to the particular Egyptologist who writes about them. He was son to Amenhotep III., of the eighteenth dynasty.

Things Seen in Egypt

itself left empty to its fate. But probably this does not often happen, even in the case of the easily replaced mud huts. As a rule, the women and descendants remain, but no more is done to the house, and it gradually becomes too bad to live in. It may be remembered that the Khedive Tewfik died unexpectedly at Helouan in a new palace which he had just built for himself. Directly the body had been carried away the furniture and everything movable was torn out of the house and piled up in the desert. The palace was left standing empty for some time, and when it was subsequently sold to Europeans to be used as an hotel instead of going to ruin, I have heard that the Egyptians viewed this departure from precedent with the gravest disapproval. The origin of this strange custom is lost in the mists of antiquity, and no doubt, under the present conditions of life in Egypt, it will fall into disuse.

The chief man in an Egyptian village is the Omdeh. He combines the functions discharged in England by the Mayor of a country town, the squire of the village, and the Justice of the Peace. He is generally illiterate even now, but he is usually a strong man, as he had need to be. He is the link and means of communication between the village and the Government; and some years ago, when the opportunities for illicit gains were great, and the small privileges attached to the position were valued because they were new and

Provincial Life in Egypt

rare, the appointment was much sought after. The whole village was split into rival factions, each anxious to secure their own candidate. Yet the privileges attached to the post are not large—only the exemption of five acres of land from taxation, and the exemption of himself and his sons from military service. On the other hand, he is responsible for the execution of all Government orders and regulations; he is at the beck and call of the inspectors of every Department, and he is the object of every sort of intrigue. In one year alone, while 898 Omdehs were accused of committing various offences, no less than 530 of these accusations were summarily dismissed as false or trivial. In only 96 cases was the accusation properly substantiated. Of qualifications which can be set down in writing, the only one required is that the candidate for the post of Omdeh must own ten acres of land. Many of them are very wealthy, but are willing to serve for the sake of the social prestige attached to the office. There are over 3,400 of these officials in Egypt altogether.

There is a good deal of happy communal life in the villages. All the peasant asks is to be left in peace to cultivate his ground, and not to have to pay his taxes twice over. An Egyptian peasant, far from all possible listeners, mentioned this to me a few years after the Occupation as an almost incredible piece of good luck which had befallen them in consequence of the coming of the English :

Things Seen in Egypt

"We know what we have to pay, and we do not have to pay it more than once. And if one comes and desires to beat us to make us pay again, we have only to send a telegram to the Englishman at Assiout" (this happened to be the Assiout district), "*and he will not let them!*"

There is in most villages a village guest-house, which is placed at the disposal of a traveller who may not be known to anyone in the village. I have found it scrupulously clean, without furniture, of course, except a divan; but then the Oriental traveller brings what he needs with him. Food is often brought to the guest-house, but no payment will be taken. Once off the beaten track, you are not only not asked for backsheesh, but I have found it difficult to get anyone to take payment for small services rendered. Perhaps, however, a traveller who could not speak Arabic would find a difference. The principal village institutions are the incubator and the pigeon-cot. The latter is in almost all villages, the incubator only in a proportion of them. The Egyptian hens, having had their eggs artificially hatched for them for some two or three thousand years, have now lost all desire to sit, and do not attempt it. The eggs are collected and brought to the incubator, where they are all tested before being accepted by the man in charge, who has afterwards to return to their owners a fixed proportion of chickens. The incubator is a low building, and has a dark, narrow passage down the middle, with



Photo by Will R. Rose.

Chester.

UNLOADING SUGAR-CANE.

The cane is being carried from a native boat lying near Elephantine Island, Assouan. In the distance is a portion of Lord Kitchener's island, which is covered with trees.



Provincial Life in Egypt

the eggs reposing in earthen ovens on either side. In the passage itself are kept and fed the "catakeets," or the young chickens, which are killed for market when they are four or five weeks old, and have never seen the light of day.

The village pigeon-cot is a much more picturesque object. It is like a little fortress, built of mud, of course, but with little rounded towers, rising above the village roofs. The villagers set great store by their pigeons, and nothing makes them so angry as any attempt on the part of a European to shoot them. No one person really has any right to give permission for pigeon-shooting, not even the Omdeh of the village, without the agreement of the rest of the village. Almost all the serious difficulties between the peasants and the British army have arisen in consequence of the latter's ignorance or disregard of this feeling, but of late years the British authorities have recognized the danger, and forbidden pigeon-shooting in the army. Tourists are still apt to offend in this way.

It is commonly supposed that they are valued chiefly for the guano they produce, besides the large quantities of young pigeons sold for food. But it is quite possible that there are still valuable carrier-pigeons among them. Pigeons have been used for carrying news from time immemorial in Egypt; and though the way natives obtain their news in districts where no telegraphs run is kept a profound secret, there is no reason to suppose

Things Seen in Egypt

that pigeons are not still the means of communication. Besides notices of their employment in serious history, there exists in a quaint Arab book professing to be history a story which is so characteristic and pretty that I give a rough translation, which, I should say, is not from the Arabic itself, but adapted from a French version :

"Once upon a time there was a Sultan in Egypt whose dominions reached far beyond Damascus on the one hand, and to Kirwan on the other. He himself had never been out of Egypt, and knew nothing of any country except his own. Many of his slaves were much better educated than he was, and among them a Syrian girl from Damascus was a great favourite.

"It chanced one day that their talk ran on the subject of fruit, and the slave girl declared that nothing in all Egypt could equal the cherries of Damascus. The Sultan was filled with a great desire to taste this wonderful fruit, but, according to his slave, it could not be brought to Egypt ; to enjoy it one must go to Damascus. The Sultan reflected that Damascus was an important city of his dominions which he had never visited. What could be more plausible than a royal progress of inspection from Cairo through Syria to that celebrated town ? The more he thought of the idea the more he liked it, which was probably just what his slave desired. But even the Sultan did not quite like to tell his Wizier that he was going to make a State visit to Damascus to eat cherries.

Provincial Life in Egypt

So he expressed concern about the state of the northern provinces, and told the Wizier to make preparations for a state progress through Syria to Damascus to inquire into their affairs.

"The Wizier was filled with alarm. He happened to be aware that such an inquiry would be very far from agreeable or convenient either to the Governor of Damascus or any other Syrian Governor. From his experience of his master, he did not for a moment believe in his concern for the provinces, but he was very much puzzled to know what the Sultan really did want. He set his wits and his wife to work, however, and at length he discovered that the sole object of the costly and inconvenient expedition was that the Sultan might eat ripe cherries. There was no time to be lost, and the Wizier rose to the occasion.

"On the morrow he caused a proclamation to be made commanding everyone in Cairo to bring his best pigeon at once and without fail to the court of the Wizier's house. No one dared to disobey the order, and all the next day crowds of men came, bringing each a pigeon in their robes. In the court of the Wizier were a great heap of affas crates and a group of the swiftest riding camels that could be obtained all ready for a journey. As fast as the pigeons were received they were packed in the crates, and by nightfall all were full. Then in the quiet starlight the swift camels stole silently away into the desert, each bear-

Things Seen in Egypt

ing two crates full of pigeons to a destination which only the Wizier and the sheikh of the camels knew.

"Weeks passed on, and still the Wizier appeared to be immersed in all the costly preparations necessary for the Sultan's royal progress through distant lands, but fresh delays were ever forthcoming, and every morning at daybreak the Wizier looked anxiously towards the east from his housetop. At length one morning he beheld, as it were, a little cloud in the sky, and soon the air was filled with the fluttering wings of homing pigeons. All day long the crowd poured into the court, each one bringing his own bird for its burden to be detached and to claim the promised reward. For under each wing of all the weary birds was a ripe cherry from Damascus!

"All day the slaves piled high the ruddy fruit on round brass trays under the eye of the Wizier, and towards sunset a brilliant procession went up to the royal palace and laid the Wizier's present of fresh cherries before the Sultan. His Majesty was delighted, and withdrew with the laden salvers into his harem, while the Wizier went home to await the course of events. At the end of two days the Sultan sent to say that he was not very well, and all the preparations for a journey must be stopped. He was not going to Damascus."

Pariah dogs are still numerous in all the villages, though they have almost become extinct in Cairo and Alexandria, where for some time they have been regularly poisoned at intervals by the

Provincial Life in Egypt

Government. They may be useful as scavengers, but they are almost an unmitigated nuisance in every other respect, and render hideous the otherwise brilliant and beautiful nights of Egypt in the neighbourhood of all human habitations. They have shared in the general prosperity of Egypt, and are no longer mangy, shrinking curs; many of them are fine strong animals with good coats. In the neighbourhood of Erment there is quite a distinct and very handsome breed, almost black in colour, and perfectly unlike in form to the ordinary pariah. An Ermenti puppy is a charming animal, like a black baby bear; but he invariably grows up too savage to be a safe pet, as more than one Englishman has discovered.

Cows are comparatively rare—successive outbreaks of cattle-plague destroyed the ancient breed of Egyptian cattle long ago. Buffaloes, of course, are common everywhere—huge ungainly creatures easily guided by a small Egyptian child, except when they take to the water. I have seen a little girl on the bank of the river plaintively entreating her black charges to return to dry ground, like a hen calling to her ducklings; and I once saw a young buffalo swim right across a full Nile from Cairo to Gezireh, where the current is very strong.

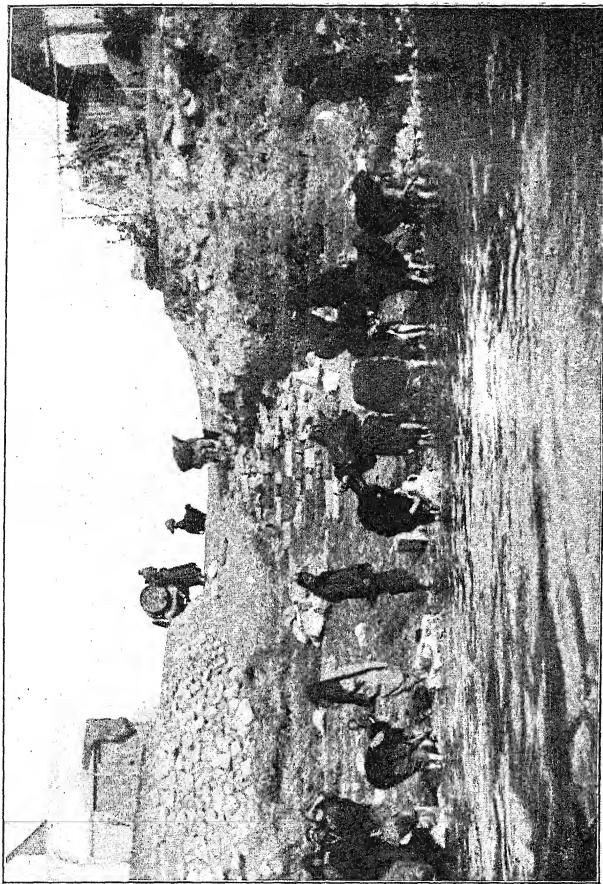
Camels are never seen on the monuments, and some scholars have inferred from this that they were not known in Egypt till comparatively late. It seems more probable, however, that the

Things Seen in Egypt

Egyptians, like most Eastern nations, divided animals into clean and unclean, and that only the ceremonially "clean" were represented on the temple walls, or made mention of in the service of the gods.

It is difficult to realize how very modern are the two things which are now so closely associated with Eastern life—coffee and tobacco. The last, indeed, is not allowed by one sect of Mohammedans, because they say that if Mohammed had known of it he would have forbidden it. But coffee is everywhere, though it was unknown in Egypt till it was introduced by a travelling merchant in the Middle Ages. Since the English occupied Egypt tea has grown in favour, particularly among the Berberin servants, but coffee is still the first offering of hospitality.

Everywhere in the provinces the stranger will receive a courteous invitation to rest and drink coffee from someone in the village which he passes. In very poor houses they drink the coffee sugarless themselves, but if the traveller accepts the invitation and seats himself on the clay divan outside the hut to await the coffee, he will perceive a small boy start off on receipt of a whispered order, and return breathless with a handful of white loaf-sugar, which he presses silently into the hand of the host. In the country there is still a good deal of the ancient Egyptian freedom accorded to women even among the Moslems. The peasants are almost always well-mannered and



ON THE BANKS OF THE NILE.

In the morning and towards sunset, the women and girls come down to cleanse and fill their jars and pots with water.



Provincial Life in Egypt

make admirable listeners, but long centuries of oppression have taught them to maintain a profound reserve concerning their own opinions and affairs, unless they are alone with their own people, or with someone whom years of experience have taught them that they may trust.

Very few even of the Moslems, much less the Christians, will venture to say anything that might seem like praise of the English rule, to which they know perfectly well that they owe all their present prosperity. They do not know when it may come to an end, and they may be left to suffer for ill-guarded expressions of satisfaction with foreign interference. It may be matter of common knowledge that a high oriental official extorts bribes regularly from everyone beneath him in the department; but it will be found quite impossible to persuade any of the victims to go and give evidence against him in a court of justice. The young fellows in the Government schools are no doubt sincere in their clamour for self-government, and really believe that they could bring about an ideal state of things; the father of a family hastens to express his fervent acquiescence in the new ideas, and secretly prays Allah to avert such a calamity. They have a strong feeling that they can keep on the right side of Providence, so to speak, by abusing loudly that for which they are most thankful; as a lad will spit on a coin, which he is delighted to receive, "for luck." I was once present at one of those sad burials of an

Things Seen in Egypt

Englishman who had "gone under," and who had died penniless and unknown in Cairo, to be buried by the Consulate (*i.e.*, as a pauper). There was no one but the clergyman and myself at the funeral, and the strength of the hired men was found insufficient to lower the coffin into the grave. At length my driver—of an ordinary street carriage—was called in from outside the cemetery and asked to help. He came readily enough, but as he lowered the coffin he uttered a curse upon the soul of the departed. No one took any notice; it was quite obvious that he had no feeling of personal malice or ill-will, and if he had known that we understood, he would probably have taken care to make his remark inaudible. He was merely protecting himself by the utterance of a formula from the ill-luck which might otherwise befall him in consequence of his help given to a dead Christian.

They are quite ready to laugh at and criticize their rulers, both Moslem and English, but in the former case they are careful to do so under the form of a puppet show, or story with fictitious names. The habit of giving nicknames to those set over them has been characteristic of the Egyptians certainly since Diocletian was known as the Dragon, and probably for centuries before that. They are also very fond of story-telling pure and simple, and will sit long in the moonlight listening with hearty appreciation to the village story-teller.

Provincial Life in Egypt

Farming operations are carried on almost all the year round, except for a few weeks in the districts where basin irrigation is still the rule. There is always some crop to be attended to, either in or out of the ground. Quite the most important of these are the date-palms, now again increasing in number since we decreed the repeal of the iniquitous laws which taxed them almost out of existence under Turkish rule. Every part of a palm-tree is useful: the trunk makes rafters for the houses; the ribs of the leaves, often 15 to 20 feet long, make the affass crates used for almost every purpose by the natives; the leaflets make baskets, and the fruit supplies food. The palm-trees are male and female, and need human agency for their fertilization.

There is a quaint story in Herodotus which he gives as illustrating the credulity and foolishness of the Egyptians. At a certain time of the year, he says, the inhabitants of each district assemble and cut certain branches from selected palms. These they carry in procession, chanting hymns and invocations, and fix them in other palm-trees, and they declare, says Herodotus scornfully, that if this were not done the palms would not bear fruit! In which, we need hardly say, they were perfectly right. The Egyptian dates are not of very good quality, but they are beautiful to look at in the time of harvest, with their great bunches of red or yellow fruit. It also makes a difference to them which way they are planted, and in trans-

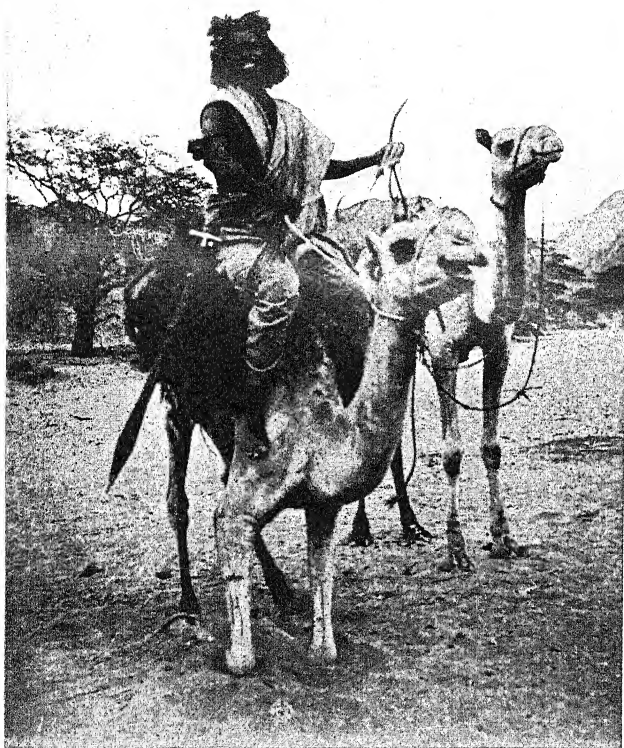
Things Seen in Egypt

planting young trees great care has to be taken. An Englishman, imported direct from Kew, found fault with his Egyptian labourers for the time they took over transplanting some palms, and in superintending, desired the young tree to be set as he thought the foliage looked best. The natives objected, and said that each tree must be set with one particular side of the trunk to the south, or they would never thrive. The Englishman wanted to know the reason, but they could not tell him, though they themselves seemed to know by instinct which way each tree must go. The Englishman—who told me this story himself—inquired into the matter, and found that they were perfectly right: the “heart” of the tree was not in the middle of the trunk, but always to one side.

In the winter the palm groves do not look at all at their best. The leaves have been cut for affass-making, and the result is that till the young leaves have grown again they look like nothing so much as a set of feather dusters that have lost nearly all their feathers.

Sugar-cane is grown largely, and there are a certain number of sugar factories at work, but they are not very profitable. When it is ripe, every little wayside stall has its bundle of rods for sale. The natives eat great quantities of it, crushing the cane in their strong white teeth and sucking the raw juice.

Cotton was grown and woven in Egypt from



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HOW THE MAILS ARE CARRIED IN THE DESERT.



Provincial Life in Egypt

the earliest times, but, like many other things, it disappeared so entirely in the general wreck of the country that it was supposed to be a new idea when it was reintroduced early in the present century. Now it covers a great part of the country, so much so that, with his usual lack of foresight, the prosperous Egyptian peasant suffered from actual scarcity of food in some districts a few years ago. He had planted all possible land with cotton, and made no provision for obtaining corn from anywhere else, and in consequence corn went up to such a price that it was extremely difficult for the poorer people to obtain any at all. Some of the Egyptian cotton is almost like silk; in one district it is made into "silk" and sold as such. It is a very pretty crop—low green bushes, something like raspberry-canecanes, with large yellow flowers. At certain times in the year you see almost every railway-station in Egypt heaped with the enormous bales, waiting to be exported. At another time their place is taken by sacks of onions, which are also exported in large quantities. The Egyptian knows much more than is commonly supposed about agriculture, and on the rare occasions when he offers advice, it is not wise for the European to disregard it. The prettiest crop is undoubtedly the clover, or berseem. It takes the place of grass meadows in other countries, and all the animals are fed on it as long as it can be had. The sheep and cattle are brought into the clover-

Things Seen in Egypt

field, and tethered in a line to eat their portion for the day, while the children who are left to look after them make nests for themselves among the clover, like brightly-coloured birds. When the whole field has been eaten down, it is generally quite ready for them to go back and begin again.

Every cabman drives about with his horse's daily allowance of berseem under his feet, and whenever he has to wait he jumps down and proceeds to feed his horses by hand. A private carriage, unless the owner is in a high position, generally uses one horse; a street carriage has always a pair. But horses are not common outside the large towns. The country gentleman generally rides an ass or a mule, the carrier in the desert a camel; while oxen and buffaloes are generally used for agricultural purposes, though the camel carries loads everywhere, and may even be seen yoked to a native plough.

Fishing is a very considerable native industry on the large lakes of Egypt, particularly on Lake Menzaleh, where about a thousand boats are employed in the fisheries. These fisheries were farmed out under the old system of Turkish rule, and so many other matters pressed for immediate attention that it was not until 1902 that the grievances of the native fisherman were redressed and the old evil system finally abolished. Now anyone can take out a licence for his boat, and if he is too poor to possess a boat, he is permitted



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A BISHARIN HOME IN THE ARABIAN DESERT.

Notice the way the baby is carried.



Provincial Life in Egypt

to catch fish from the shore with a net without paying any tax. He is also permitted to sell his fish to anyone and at any place he pleases. Within three years of these reforms being carried out the average earnings of the fisherman in a month had quadrupled, and seventy new boats had been launched on one lake alone. But a curious result followed: the price of fish almost doubled in the great towns of Egypt. The fishermen, being now at liberty to sell their fish when and where they please, refuse to sell at all except at a fair price. Fish left on their hands they either send away themselves to some market where they know it will command a good price, or salt it down. In the same way, when the octroi duties were abolished in Cairo and Alexandria, we all hoped that the price of food would go down. To our surprise, it rose considerably and directly. The peasant who brought in his poultry and food-stuffs under the old régime could not afford to take them back and pay again the next day on the same goods, or as often as he brought them into town, so he sold them the first day for what he could get. But under the present régime, if he does not obtain what he thinks a fair price for his turkeys and other live produce, he just marches them back again, and brings them some other day when there is more demand. Even green-stuffs and fruit can sometimes be kept a day; in any case, he is sure of obtaining now a fair reward for his labour. It is

Things Seen in Egypt

seldom that the best-intentioned reforms bring such an immediate and substantial increase of property to the people whom it is proposed to benefit.

Life on these lakes is still very much what it was in the days of the Pharaohs, as represented on the walls of the tomb chambers. Fowling is practised still, though shooting will probably take its place in time. The lakes are something like the Norfolk Broads on a very large scale. Lake Menzaleh will probably become every year more and more a resort for European sportsmen who can speak Arabic. A beautiful account of the northern lakes appeared in the *Cornhill* a few years ago, written by Mr. Hogarth, if I remember rightly. The lake in the Fayoum, which the tourists know best, is not so good either for sport or fishing.

A good deal of pottery is made in the southern provinces, and floated down the river for sale and export. The principal articles are zeyrs and goollas, the large jars used for holding water, and the smaller ones for drinking. It is wonderful to watch the natives loading a cargo-boat with these fragile porous jars. They are thrown from hand to hand as quickly as possible, and caught unerringly.

Towards sunset the flocks and herds stream back to their village in charge of the herdsmen, often a small child or an old man, who walks along spinning wool on a primitive arrangement. The women have, many of them, been at work all

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day, but they have still their water to fetch from the river or the nearest canal. A group of these slight, erect figures in their trailing garments, each with an enormous jar poised upon her head, making their way to the water through the sunset glow, is one of the most picturesque sights in Egypt.

Among the picturesque objects to be seen in the provinces are the domed white tombs outside the villages or by the roadside. The earliest of these cover the bones of long-forgotten Christians, but for some centuries it has been customary to bury Mohammedan "saints" in this way. In the case of a religious beggar—one who has chosen a certain spot on which he sits all day in rags chanting appeals to Allah, and to the public in His name—it has been customary to bury him on the same spot which he hallowed by his presence in life. When this happened to be among the palms, just at the entrance to a village, the result was a picturesque object which harmed no one; but as the towns spread and grew, these tombs which, once built, were of course inviolable, became a very great inconvenience and obstruction to traffic. Those absolutely in Cairo streets have been, under British rule, restored and beautified till they are at least sightly and sanitary, if unsuited to the middle of a crowded street. But while thus respecting accomplished facts and acquired rights, orders were given that no more of these burials were to be permitted in the public roads.

Things Seen in Egypt

There was a certain fakir who had always sat in the entrance of one of the gates of Alexandria, through which the traffic yearly became greater. He was a very holy man, and no one ventured to interfere with him as he sat chanting his appeals and invocations all day. But he was very old, and the English head of the police was on the watch. One day it was reported to him that the fakir was dead, and that they were making preparations to inter him on the spot. Colonel H. sent down a courteous intimation that it could not be permitted. The disciples of the fakir, with humblest salaams, represented that they were powerless in the matter; that the dead body of the holy one refused to allow itself to be carried from the spot; and that even if it were possible for them to risk the anger of the dead, they were powerless to remove the body.

Colonel H. sent back word that he entirely sympathized, and quite understood that the holy one refused to be carried from his place without due honour and ceremony—he was even now making preparations to do this—and in half an hour he and a guard of honour equal to the occasion would be there, and would themselves bear the holy dead to whatever cemetery they might select for his burial. And before the mourners could determine what answer to make to this astonishing proposal, the jingle of arms was heard, and a goodly force of *gens d'armes* had encompassed them, bringing a bier as evidence

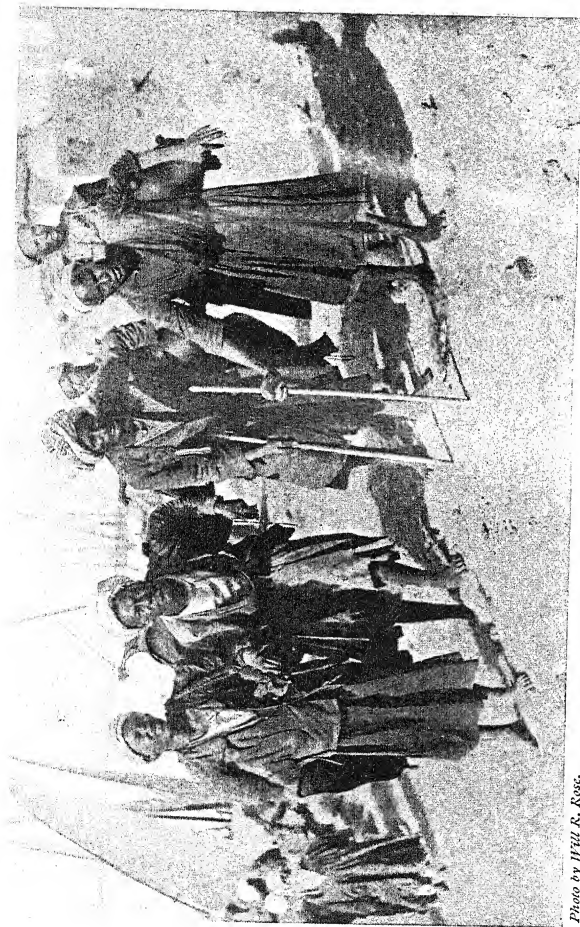
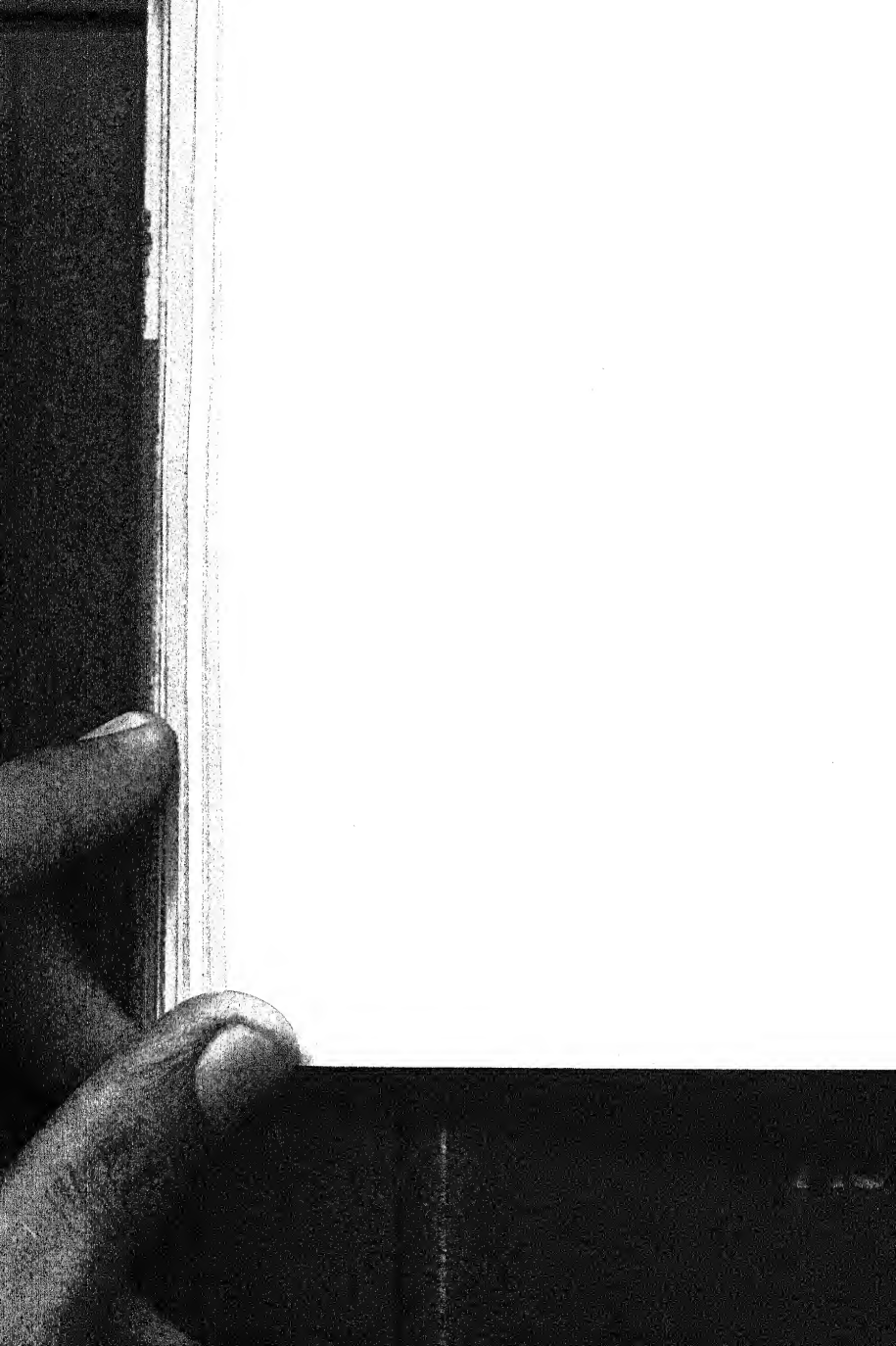


Photo by Will R. Koss.

WATER-CARRIERS AT LUXOR.

The trade of a water-carrier in Egypt is an ancient and important one. There are three grades. These men belong to the Sakka, which is the most common.

Chatter.



Provincial Life in Egypt

of their good faith. In a trice, but with all due ceremony, the fakir's body was borne away, and the mourning crowd decided to follow.

Sacred trees still exist, and generally mark the site of some holy grave, often of a Christian martyr whom the present-day Egyptian regards as a holy Moslem. There is a very ancient sacred tree on the Island of Rhoda, which may be visited at the same time as the Nilometer there, though it is some way to the north. Its limbs lie almost on the ground, and are covered with the nails and bits of coloured rag driven in by the suppliants to remind the saint of their prayer. It is not a very common tree; the natives call it "nobk," or a name which sounds as near to this combination of letters as may be. I have seen the tree planted also near the Christian cemeteries of Deronka, beyond Assiout. Under the sacred tree of Rhoda no vestige of a tomb remains, but the natives say that a very holy woman lies there "from a long, long time ago."

Dolls in some places are made most ingeniously of clay, moulded round a stick and dried. The hair and features are all supplied, and the aroosa—the name for a doll is the same as that for a bride—is dressed in bright cotton garments. Little toys, also, are made of clay, and sold for half a farthing, but the Egyptian child is not at all dependant on toys, and will amuse himself for hours quite contentedly. Lately they have taken to playing what they think is football all over the

Things Seen in Egypt

country, and are most energetic over it, in spite of their fluttering skirts.

Babies are carried astride on their mothers' shoulders in a most picturesque fashion. From this perch they gaze at you with those inscrutable eyes which seem to be the inheritance of even the youngest Egyptian, and will generally respond to your advances with grave dignity. But it is wise to be careful in this respect, for there is still some fear of the evil eye among the rural population. Charms to protect the little one may generally be seen attached to the front lock of hair or suspended round the neck.

Various gold coins are often strung to the necklace of the peasant woman. Many of the Mohammedans still respect the law of their prophet against "usury," which they interpret to mean any form of interest, and this means that they must either hoard their money or buy jewels or some thing that does not bear interest. This was the unforeseen factor in the great land gamble which ruined so many people in Cairo a year or two ago. The Mohammedans, who had grown rich under the Occupation, did not know what to do with their money. It became the fashion among them to desire a house and garden like those the English were building everywhere outside Cairo, and they bought all they could get without any regard to the price. It was nothing to them that the sum they paid represented a rental of £1,000 to £2,000 a year, and seeing

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that a house which had cost at the most £3,000 or £4,000 to build could be sold for anything from £12,000 to £30,000, the European builders and speculators hastened to acquire all the land they could get, in order to build and sell more houses at the same fabulous rates, and also flats for the dispossessed Europeans who had sold their villas. Then Lord Cromer resigned, and the reaction set in. The natives did not know what might happen next, and the slight check which in such a state of things is enough to bring about a collapse was given with fatal effect at the time, though no doubt with advantage to the future of the country.

Most of the Mohammedans have doubtless returned to their primitive practice of burying their money in the ground. One man alone was known to have £80,000 in gold stored in this way a year or two ago. A Moslem in the provinces who was seriously ill sent for an English doctor from Cairo. It was a long way, and the fee agreed upon was £50. After the doctor had prescribed for his patient, and was waiting to return to Cairo, there was a good deal of fussing in and out, and at length one of the male relatives came and apologized to the doctor for the delay in producing his fee. The fact was, he explained, that the son, who had charge of the key of the shed in the garden under which the money was buried, had gone out, and no one could get at the store till he came back again.

Things Seen in Egypt

In March, 1901, the British authorities in Cairo established the system of Post-Office Savings Banks. The new security was readily taken advantage of by the Christians, but the Mohammedans were at first suspicious, and even when they realized that this was no trap on the part of the Government, but a really safe place of deposit for their savings, there was still the difficulty that they were offered interest on their money. But the convenience of so safe a place of deposit induced them to find a way of escape from infringing the law of the Koran. They could refuse to receive the interest; and to their honour be it recorded that they did so. In the first two years that savings banks existed no less than 3,195 Moslem depositors refused on religious grounds to receive any interest on their money.

This being the case, the authorities consulted the Grand Mufti and other lights of Islam, and a law was framed and published with their sanction which was intended to remove these conscientious objections. It certainly had some effect, for the next year, out of nearly 30,000 depositors, about 13,000 were Moslems, and of these, 94 were described as "Sheikh" or "Ulema."

All Egyptians, both Copt and Moslem, compare favourably with ourselves in the matter of sobriety. It is one of the ways in which we should do well to imitate them. Drunkenness exists, of course, but I have mingled freely with the poorer classes of both religions for many



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THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COLONNADE IN EGYPT.

This temple is at Thebes. The great altar of sacrifice used to stand in this court. Most of the Egyptian temples have been used as Christian churches by the early Christians. There is an altar in this temple with Coptic crosses.



Provincial Life in Egypt

years, and though one permits and the other forbids the use of intoxicating liquors, I have never seen either a Christian or a Mohammedan Egyptian drunk. Berbers sin much more frequently in this respect ; I cannot say the same of them.

Concerning that form of morality which more than anything else determines the character and development of a nation, the cleavage between the two religions is wide and deep. I do not wish to enlarge upon this matter, but I think it fair to the Christian Egyptians to put one fact on record concerning them. To quote the words of an Englishman who has lived for years among them, both in Cairo and in some of the larger provincial towns: "It should not be forgotten that there is not a Coptic woman of public bad character in all Egypt."

CHAPTER IV

THE WORKADAY WORLD

IN ancient times Egypt was celebrated for its beautiful workmanship in many ways. Some of these arts and crafts gradually decayed under the blight of the Moslem dominion, and many were finally and violently destroyed, so far as Egypt was concerned, at the time of the Turkish conquest in 1517, when even the Moslem eulogists of the Sultan admit that he ruined more than fifty different Egyptian industries. Still, there is a certain amount of beautiful work done in Egypt even now, and there is some hope of a revival in this direction. In the old days, the most beautiful painting and illuminating was done in Egypt, exquisite glass work, gold and metal work, and enamelling; beautiful tiles were made, there was exquisite weaving and embroidery, and many of these arts were encouraged by some of their Moslem rulers. Almost all the specimens which have come down to us were preserved because they had been wrought for the service of the mosques, like the beautiful metal work, the glass lamps and the illuminated Korans,

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which may be seen in the Arab museum. But though there are still many native industries, there are only three left of the beautiful handicrafts which flourished in pre-Mohammedan days. These are the brass work, the gold and silver embroidery on net or cloth, and the wood work. In the brass bazaar you may still see a poorly clad and apparently uneducated man sit down before a plain circle of brass, take a reed pen, and without further instrument of any sort proceed to draw the most intricate patterns and circles, which he next proceeds to hammer out with a chisel. In the embroidery stalls another man will be stitching down the gold and silver on the finest broadcloth, which you used to be able to buy here in all the exquisite pale colours loved of the true Egyptian, now, alas! rarely seen. Sometimes one feels as if the modern Egyptians had a genius for copying the wrong things. They copy our bad manners, our hideous (and, for their climate, unwholesome) clothes, our machine-made furniture and ugly patterns; but our truthfulness, punctuality and honesty they seem to have no use for.

The wood work has been less fortunate, perhaps, than the metal work and embroidery, owing to the terrible philistinism of the European tourist. Nothing will content him but that he must have what he fondly calls the genuine old "moosharabieh," and the result is that all the beautiful old lattice work has been torn out of the native houses and

Things Seen in Egypt

from the fronts of the once picturesque streets, and made up into shapes for which it was never designed, and put to uses for which it was never intended; and meanwhile the genuine living industry was almost starved out of existence. Mere age can have no possible meaning in such a connection; it is not even as if the tourists cared to know the history and meaning of the things they so recklessly cause to be destroyed. However, for some years now there has been a steady demand for new and good work of this kind, so there is no more fear of this fine handicraft dying out.

The origin of its present name, "moosharabieh" (spelt in many different ways), lies in the fact that these ornamental lattices were made for screening the windows of Moslem and the balconies of Christian houses. They effectually prevented any passer-by from seeing into the rooms, but did not entirely prevent the ladies from seeing out. It was the custom to make small recesses in the screen or lattice, just large enough to hold a goolla or porous jar of water. The wind—of which there is always plenty in Egypt—blew through the lattice on the porous jar, making the water delightfully cool. These recesses were called "shurabieh," or the "place of drinking," and the name was gradually applied to the whole lattice. What "moosh" means in this connection I know not, but "moosh" is the common form of the negative—*e.g.*, "moosh owes," "do *not*

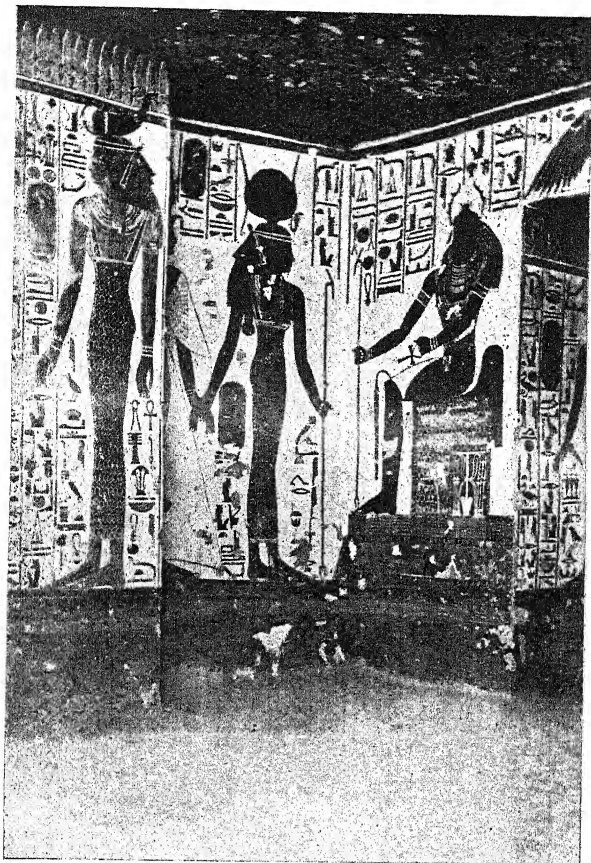


Photo by H. R. Rose.

Chester.

THE INTERIOR OF QUEEN NEFERTARI'S TOMB.

The ceiling of this tomb is painted a dark blue and covered with golden stars, representing night.



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want." It happens that the native name for a carriage of any kind is "arabia," and it also happened that the name of the military adventurer whose rebellion brought the English into Egypt was Arabi. One of the tourists who came out soon after the revolt which was followed by the British occupation entangled himself delightfully in this verbal snare. It was told with glee in Cairo that, on his return to England, he had given a lecture on the political state of affairs in Egypt, in the course of which he made the following statement to his audience: "Egypt is now divided into two great parties, one desiring reform under the patriot Arabi, and one preferring things to remain as they are. The people of the first party are called 'Arabias'; those of the second party are known as 'moosh Arabias.'"

In the older forms of this moosharabia work the wood is cut in the form of large, carved, wooden beads, and strung on wire. In the newer work the uprights are generally in one piece, and the rest of the pattern filled in by the joining of small pieces. An old panel or two is often worked into a new screen, that it may be sold as a genuine "antika." It should be mentioned, however, that the ordinary uneducated native has not the least intention to cheat or lie when he assures the indignant tourist that a piece of palpably modern work is a beautiful antika. He simply cannot understand the Western love for mere age, and has adopted the word "antique" into his

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language with a meaning of his own. He observed that whenever a Frangi admired anything very much he called it an antique. To him, therefore, it was evident that the word which he heard them repeat so often, and apply to so many different things, must mean anything extremely precious, and he promptly used it in that sense. When a very beautiful alabaster reredos was presented to the English church in Cairo, fresh from the carver's hands, the natives all spoke of the wonderful "antika" which had arrived.

Beside the lattice work, beautiful carving and inlaying is done in walnut and other woods. Use is often made now of a beautiful red wood which has been brought down of late years from the Soudan, but this is generally to be met with in the Government technical schools, where utility is aimed at, and no beautiful work is done for its own sake. The inlaying is very costly, and a small table in the best work may cost as much as £80.

Other picturesque but coarser handicrafts are to be found in many places. In the dim "flag bazaar" they cover sail and tent cloth with curious patterns cut out in red and blue cotton, and sewn on to the cloth in a sort of appliqué. Panels of these are now specially made to sell to the tourists. They are generally ingenious copies of some scene on the monuments. In the shoe bazaar long lines of the red and yellow slippers light up the

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scene with vivid colour. They are very fond of red leather, and use it for native saddles and bags and the covers of trays.

The longer one lives in the East, the better one learns to understand the Bible, and an incident of daily life will often throw an unexpected light upon the text. The mention of red leather reminds me of such an incident. In the story of Joseph the chief baker tells him a dream which he is to interpret, and, according to our translation, he says: "I had three white baskets on my head, and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head." In the Revised Version the passage is translated, "baskets of white bread." Either statement appears intelligible enough, but neither is correct, as I learned from a gentleman whose long residence in the East and familiarity with Oriental tongues had specially qualified him to give an opinion. The expression translated "white baskets" is not Hebrew at all; it is an old Egyptian word left untranslated in the original, and it is still in use among the present Egyptians, but it signifies "red leather." This was for some time a puzzle to the scholar in question, as he could not see what connection red leather could have with the passage in Genesis. Now, the kitchen establishment of a rich Egyptian is often separated from the house itself. When the meal is ready it is arranged in round, flat trays or baskets, covered with more or less handsome covers of embroidered material, and

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carried on the heads of the kitchen attendants to the dining-room. In Arabic the ordinary word for a basket is "zambil," for a tray "sonnea." But, passing by one of these establishments one day, this gentleman observed that the baskets were particularly handsome, and entirely covered with red leather. He stopped and asked the cook what was the name of these baskets. "Those?" said the cook. "Those are 'sellah huri.'" It was the identical expression used in Genesis, and the mystery was explained.

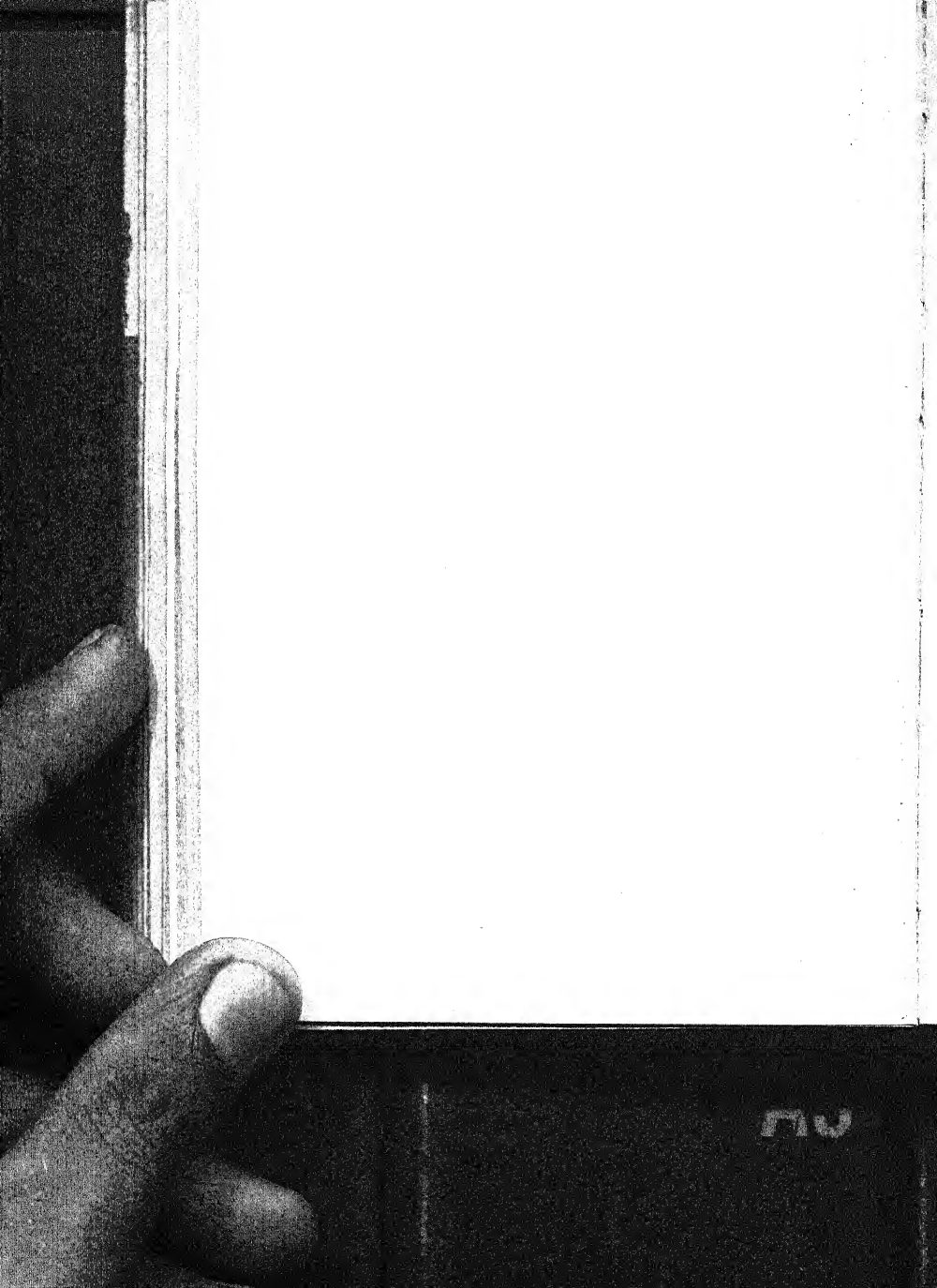
Very few visitors seem to know the cotton bazaar in Cairo, yet it is well worth a visit, not only because it is a very picturesque, if insanitary, place, but because it is one of the few almost perfect examples left in Cairo of a khan for travellers. In just such a place as this our Saviour must have been born at Bethlehem. There is the court for the animals, all driven in and herded here for the night in the days long ago, when this khan was used for its original purpose, and all round are deep arched recesses, with stone platforms in front of them, where the herdsman and servants in charge of the animals slept. Above this and all round it, with an awning or light roof to the court, ran the rooms of the inn proper looking into the court. The only entrance to the place is through a low, narrow, arched way, which leads from the court, under the inn, to the street. Now the arched recesses are filled with brightly coloured cottons—stripes for the men



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THE DESERTED TEMPLE AT LUXOR.



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only, other patterns for the women. I discovered once that my native servants were rather scandalized because I had bought myself a dress of the striped cotton which should only be worn by men. On the platforms sit the merchants with their scribes. It was in such a recess as this that Joseph and Mary had to take refuge "because there was no room for them in the inn."

Behind the cotton bazaar the weavers of silk ends to cotton cloths may be seen at their work. There are many qualities of Egyptian silks; the best is very expensive, but the tourists generally buy a quality which, though half cotton, has the merit of washing well and looking well to the last. It is always woven in fine stripes, and generally in beautiful colours. The true Egyptian, whether Copt or Moslem, has a fine sense for beautiful colour; though in these days, since he has abandoned his own cool and clean garments of silk and cotton for our stove-pipe abominations in cheap woollens, which attract dirt and infection of every kind, he has very little chance of showing it. It is the mongrel population of Turk, Arab, Negro, and Berber which loves gaudy colours and aniline dyes.

Mat-making is also carried on in Cairo, though the finer kinds of mats come from the provinces, where also most of the pottery is made. The red and black glazed pottery which is to be bought in the Cairo bazaars comes from Assiout.

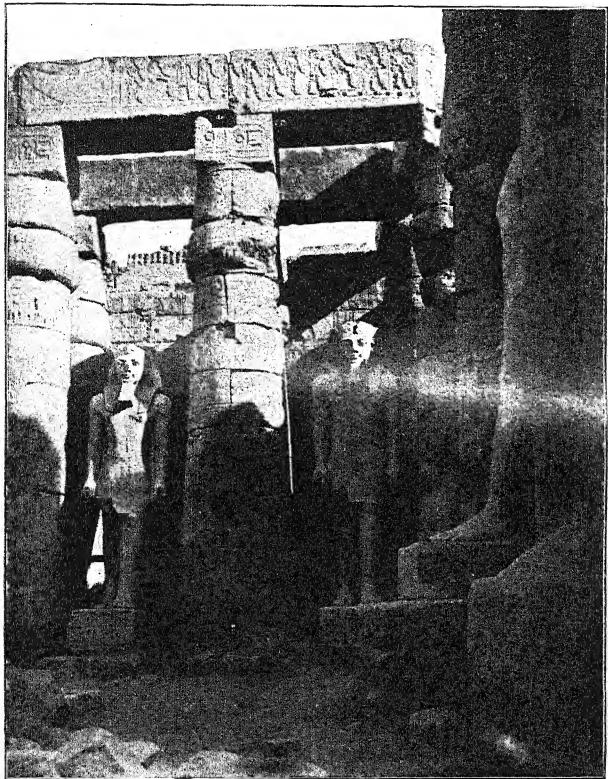
In all the native bazaars quite tiny boys may

Things Seen in Egypt

oe seen hard at work and very proud of themselves. They are brought up to their fathers' trades at a very early age in the tiny raised open shops along the different bazaars.

One of the oldest industries in Egypt is the working of tin. They will extemporize a forge on the bare ground at almost any moment to tin the saucepans of the household, or mend anything that may be brought to them. One striking bit of evidence for the Egyptian origin at some long past time of the European gipsies is the fact that Zingari, one of their many names, is the old Egyptian word for a tinsmith or tinker, still in common use.

The water-carriers are a very familiar sight in Cairo, though the modern water-carts have driven them from the principal streets. They fetch the water from the Nile to the houses where the women of the family are too well off to work in the fields, or go down with their jars to the river, and they still water some small streets where the carts cannot go. A favourite form of charity with the well-to-do natives is to set a zeyr outside his house for the benefit of the thirsty passers-by, and this he pays a water-carrier to keep full regularly. The water-sellers, too, are often hired by some rich man to dispense water gratuitously to everyone for the day, generally some day of feast. The seller carries his supply in a zeyr upon his back, with a branch of green leaves by way of stopper. He has two brass cups which he clicks together to



STATUES OF RAMSES II. AT LUXOR.



The Workaday World

attract attention. He generally carries a goolla also, and it is curious to watch the demeanour of one of these men in a crowd on an occasion when he has received a certain sum for the day, since he never asks or waits for money. But the observer will notice that if he thinks the man who asks him for water will give him a tiny coin for himself he offers the goolla; if it is a child or a poor person, he offers the brass cup. I watched one of these men moving about for some time one day, and once or twice when a well-dressed man asked him for water he offered the brass cup instead of the goolla. I thought to myself that surely these men will put the para (a fortieth part of twopence-halfpenny) into the bowl for him. But the water-seller never made a mistake in his prognostication.

The lemonade or sherbet seller is an even more picturesque sight; his jar is of glass and highly ornamented, and he wears a large and gaily patterned red handkerchief by way of apron. There are also liquorice-water sellers, who generally wheel their store upon a hand-cart, and sweetmeat sellers of every kind, who carry an affass stand for their round tray.

Affass-making is an industry practised all over Egypt from the earliest ages. The first letter of the word is one of those tiresome sounds which no one European letter can represent, so some call it "affass," and some "gaffas" (hard g), and some "kaffass." The material used is the long rib of a date-palm leaf when all the leaflets and thorns have

Things Seen in Egypt

been removed, and these are turned to endless uses. An affass generally means a strong rough crate made of these palm-leaf ribs, but they also make divans, bedsteads, circular tray stands, and many other things. At a certain time of the year as many palm-leaves as the tree will spare are cut for affass-making. This harvest leaves the palm a denuded and ungainly object, and spoils the appearance of the country very much, but it is too valuable to forgo.

Before the English occupied the country, every possible use of the palm-tree was made an excuse for a different tax, and the tax on the tree itself was so heavy that, rather than pay it year by year while the tree was growing up, they rooted up the young seedlings. Now the country is once more full of palm-trees in every stage of growth.

Boat-building, of course, has always been carried on in Egypt, and visitors to the Museum in Cairo should not fail to notice the models of various ancient Egyptian boats taken from the tombs. Navigation is said to employ more hands in Egypt than any other calling except agriculture, but of late years complaints have been made that it is very difficult to obtain sailors on the Nile, and owing to the construction of enormous barrages without any efficient provision for dredging or keeping the water-way open, navigation becomes more difficult every year. The sailors are all Egyptian or Berberin, mostly the former. The Arab prefers his "ship of the desert," and does not embark



A NILE BOAT UNDER FULL SAIL.

The lofty lateen sails catch all the air there is, even when under the lee of the high river-banks.



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on water if he can help it. The long-drawn chants of the sailors are curious, though hardly musical from our point of view. The Egyptian, however, considers our point of view barbarous, our music unrestful noise, and much prefers his own half-tones and long-sustained notes. In the matter of keeping time they are certainly wonderful.

Building and stone-cutting are also flourishing trades, though the beautiful stone carving lavished on every church—never on mere houses—in the early centuries of Egyptian Christianity was long ago persecuted out of existence. Fragments of it may be seen in the latest room at the Museum, and are occasionally unearthed from the ruins of some church. But as the Egyptians, like their pagan forefathers, kept their best stone work for their temples of worship, which in the case of the Christians were deliberately and constantly destroyed by the Moslems, only the pillars and other carved ornaments which were taken by force for the adornment of mosques survive to this day, and must be looked for in the oldest and largest mosques of every town. In one of the largest mosques of Mohallet el Kebir there are over seventy of these Christian pillars, but they may be found almost everywhere.

The glass industry has quite perished, and though the salt deserts, if fairly near towns, are as suitable for glass-making as they were centuries ago, it is not likely ever to revive. Like the finer

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kinds of Japanese enamel, it needs more care and hand labour than this commercial age has time for. There are still some beautiful examples of glass lamps in the Arab Museum, dating from the last three centuries before the Turkish conquest. These were made for mosques; those made for the earlier Christian churches were all destroyed. I have seen a beautiful platter of glass among the sacred vessels in an Egyptian church, but could not ascertain its date. The sacramental vessels were often made of glass after the gold and silver vessels had been seized by the Moslems, just as the destroyed churches were rebuilt each time in meaner materials in order not to attract the cupidity of the Moslem rulers.

CHAPTER V

THE ANCIENT FAITH

THE great characteristic of the ancient faith of Egypt, which survived through thousands of years of development, change, decay, and even death—for this one vital truth of the dead religion linked it with the Christian religion, which finally overcame it—is the faith in a future life. In the earliest times of which we have written record—that is, not less than 4,000, and probably 5,000, years before Christ—this future life was not to be compared with the life on earth. The dead man was saved from actual annihilation by the pious care of his friends, who embalmed his body that it might not decay, and brought food, which the recital of the prescribed formulas rendered serviceable to him for nourishment.

But the dead thus preserved were no better off than the dead in the Greek Hades, that dim abode “where dwell the senseless dead, the phantoms of men outworn.”

“Rather would I live above ground as the hireling of another,” says the great Achilles when Odysseus found him in Hades, “with a landless

Things Seen in Egypt

man, who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed."

"Other spirits of the dead that be departed stood sorrowing, and each one asked of those that were dear to them."

And, again, Teiresias says:

"Wretched man, wherefore hast thou left the sunlight and come hither to behold the dead, and a land desolate of joy?"

These were not the dead that were in punishment; they were receiving the most that the future life had to offer; and in the same way the Egyptian dead are described as "enveloped in perpetual gloom," "inert, and incapable of returning to enjoy the light of the world."

Then came Osiris, the first of the dead to escape from this gloomy world, the way for him to do so being discovered by the great love and untiring efforts of his wife, sister, and son, aided by Anubis and Thoth. Osiris rose to a real joyous life in the heaven of the gods, where he was given to reign over a glorious paradise—"the fields of Talu"—and to receive there the souls of all those Egyptians who were capable of following him. The name Osiris gradually came to denote, not only the god-man himself, but also the spirits of all those who, by virtue of the same beliefs and rites, had succeeded in escaping from Hades and entering his happy paradise.

It was rather a material paradise, perhaps, with its perpetual feasting, never-failing flowers and

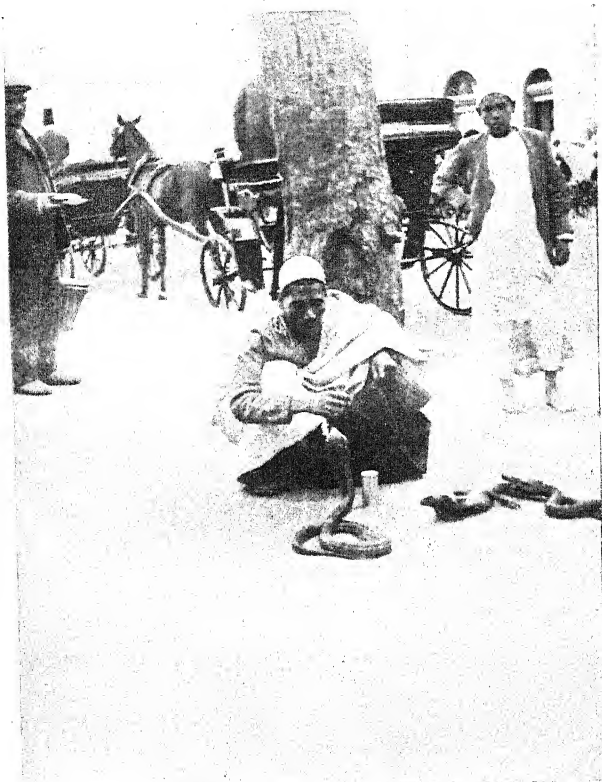


Photo by Will R. Rose.

Chester.

A CAIRO SNAKE-CHARMER.

The charmer will suddenly throw his cobras at one's feet. As well as the snakes, a monitor may be seen. It looks like a small crocodile. When not performing he will carry it on his head and the cobras in a bag.



The Ancient Faith

fruit, and enlarged bodily powers. But it was an advance upon the older conception, and by-and-by grew up the further idea of the "bird soul" ranging all the courts of heaven. In whatever condition, however, the happy soul was more or less dependent on those on earth. The proper formula must be recited on earth to sustain the freed soul in heaven, and everyone was ready to perform this pious duty, that in his turn he might receive the benefit. The following is a sample of the injunction to all passers-by engraved over a tomb of the twelfth dynasty :

"O ye princes, O ye first prophets, O ye high priests, O ye priests, celebrant and initiated into the mysteries, O ye lay prophets, O ye officials, O ye dwellers in your cities, all who may be in this temple, and who, passing by, may recite this formula : If you desire that Osiris Khontamentik may never cease to offer you his festival cakes, or if you desire that the jackal Uapatitu, your god, whose love is sweet, should make your heart glad like the heart of a king for ever and ever, if you love life and hate death, and if you desire strength for your children, say with your mouth the Formula for thousands of bread, wine and cakes, oxen, geese, perfumes, garments and all things good and pure which are for the life of a god to the Ka of Sahot pabri, son of the lady Moutnibdidit."

At the funeral the priests offered sacrifices of clean animals and libations of drink offerings, and a great funeral feast was held in accordance with the means of the mourners. Isis and Nephthys,

Things Seen in Egypt

the two goddesses whose love had found out for Osiris the way to escape from Hades, were often represented by images in the tomb as guardians of the dead. But the offerings and funeral feasts were repeated on certain days by the relations of the deceased, although for the spiritual sustenance of the dead the mere recital of the prescribed formula were enough.

Not only food, but servants, were provided for the dead by their faithful friends. The little images of glazed blue earthenware which are still to be met with in thousands in Egypt (many of them of modern manufacture) were buried with the necessary formula which would give life to them in the other world, that they might serve the dead man. These spirit servants were the earliest form of the belief in genie, who could be invoked by one who knew the proper formula, and made to serve him. On most of them are written the following injunctions in the form of an address and a reply :

"O Ushabti figures: If the Osiris [*i.e.*, the deceased] is decreed to do any work whatever in the Underworld, may all obstacles be cast down in front of him!"

"Here am I, ready whenever thou callest."

"O ye figures: Be ye ever watchful to work, to plough and sow the fields, to water the canals (fill the canals with water), and to carry sand from the east to the west."

"Here am I, ready whenever thou callest."

There was a further advance in religious thought

The Ancient Faith

when the resurrection from the dead became dependant not so much on the due performance of certain rites and the recital of prescribed formula as upon right conduct in this present world. Then the dead, before the life-giving rites were allowed to be performed, were brought to judgment in the hall of Osiris, and were called upon to make solemn declaration that they had *not* committed the forty-two sins. Among these are the following :

"I have never committed any fraud against men. I have never borne false witness. I do not know falsehood. I have not caused grief to the widow. I have not been idle. I have killed no one. I have not seized upon any fields," etc.

Then his soul was weighed in the balance, and Thoth inscribed the result and proclaimed the sentence.

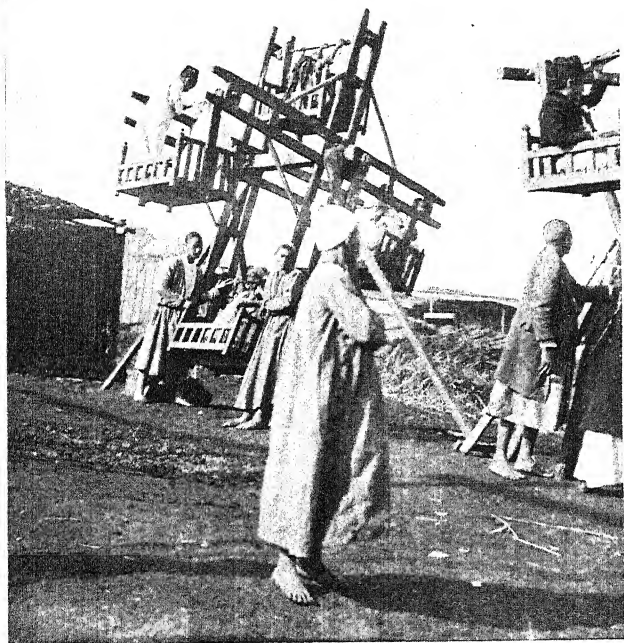
The worship of animals belongs to the period of the decay and death of the national faith. It is probable that the animals were at first merely the heraldic sign to denote each nome. Then the animal became "tabu," and from this to worship on the part of the ignorant masses was no long transition.

For many of the more intellectual among the Egyptians of the first century A.D. the preaching of the Christian religion must have seemed like a call to reform, and to return to the old faith in the god-man Osiris, who in these latter days had manifested himself once more upon earth.

Things Seen in Egypt

In the cross they saw their old sign of eternal life—the key of that life which Christ, like Osiris, came to give them more abundantly. Many of the customs which survive even in our Western churches to this day were borrowed from the ancient Egyptians in the early days of the Church. Of these we may instance the surplice—the white linen garment of the priests of Isis ; the tonsure, which was also a distinguishing mark of the Egyptian priesthood ; and the use of the ring in the marriage service. The ancient Egyptians, before the introduction of coinage, used rings of different metals for money. In their marriage it was customary for the man to give his wife a ring of gold, in token that he thereby endowed her with his wealth. This custom continued among the Egyptians after their conversion to Christianity, and passed from them into the Church at large.

The Christian code of morals, as we have seen, was an advance upon, but in essentials the same as, the religious code of Egypt. It also might be summed up in the two great divisions—your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour. It lacked the final discovery, "Love is the fulfilling of law." But the ancient Egyptian, like the modern Christian, knew that he lived in the sight of God, and under the shadow of the eternal wings.



AN ARAB BIG WHEEL.

After the Feast of Ramadân comes that of Bairam, when the Moslems throughout the East enjoy themselves. In Cairo there is held a fair, in which such sights as this are to be seen.

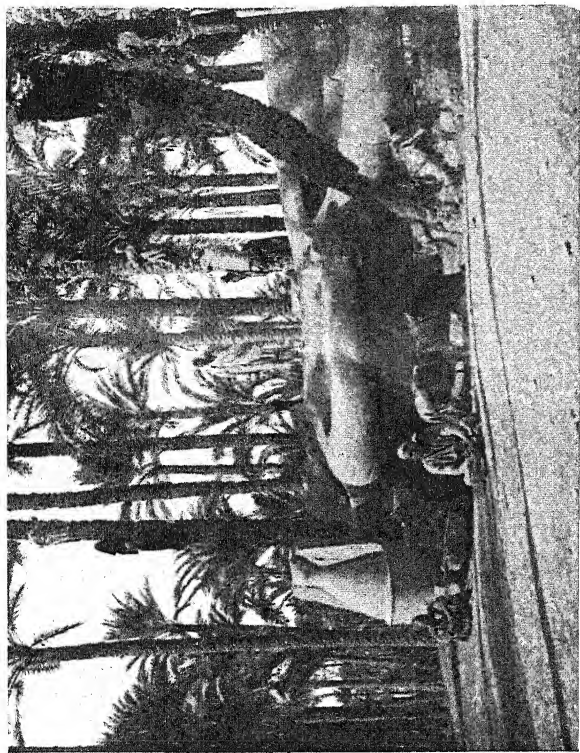
CHAPTER VI

SOME EGYPTIAN FESTIVALS

IN England we are hardly aware of our good fortune in having one definite calendar to go by, instead of the assortment of odd calendars spread over the year with which Egyptian residents are troubled. The first official almanac ever published in modern Egypt found it necessary to give five, neatly arranged in parallel columns, and everyone must reckon with at least three of these in ordinary life. If you were asked to give accurately the date of a certain event which happened, let us say, on All Saints' Day, you must answer: "It was on Sunday, the 1st of November, 1908, on the 19th of November (Julian), the 7th of Shawal, 1326 (Arabic), the 22nd of Babeh, 1625 (Egyptian), and the 7th of Marheshvan, 5669 (Jewish)." This answer would be correct if the event had happened in the morning. But if it had taken place in the evening of the same day, your answer would not be the same. For two out of these five calendars begin a new day at sunset, so an additional element of uncertainty is introduced. Nor is the difference of calendar merely an academic question; three, at

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least, must be reckoned with in making arrangements—the English, the Egyptian, and the Arabian. A fourth, the Jewish, is becoming yearly more important for business people. The English and Egyptian months are solar, the Moslem and Jewish are lunar. Moreover, the various calendars begin from different times of the year, and reckon from different periods of the world's history. In 1908, after our own New Year came the Greek New Year, on January 14. Then we had the Moslem New Year on February 3. But the Egyptian considers autumn, his time of sowing, the beginning of the year—September 11, or, by the Julian Calendar which the Greeks use, August 30. On September 26 came the Jewish New Year's Day. His era is the furthest back of all—nothing less than the creation of the world! The Greeks (*i.e.*, members of the Greek Church in Egypt, who are many of them Egyptians) and the English reckon from the probable year of the birth of our Lord, but the Arabs and the Moslem Egyptians count from the flight of Mohammed in A.D. 622, and since that event they have managed to get in 1326 years, while we only count 1287. The Christian Egyptian dates from the Era of Martyrs, or A.D. 284. If you attempt to write history in Egypt, this confusion of dates goes far to unhinge the most well-regulated mind. Sooner or later you give up the attempt, in fixing the dates of long-past events, to attain more than approximate accuracy.

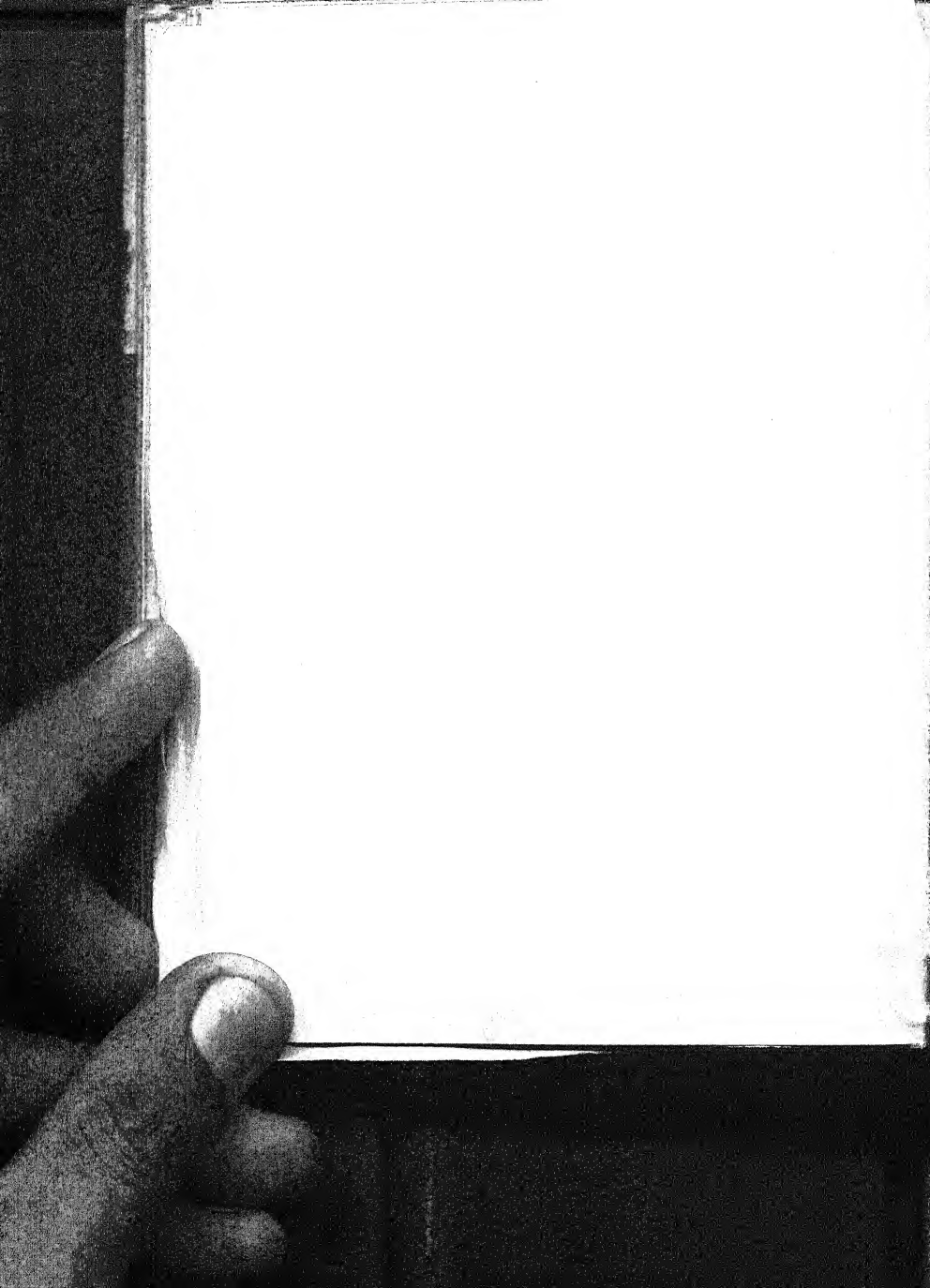


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**THE STATUE OF RAMSES II., AN EMBELLISHMENT OF HIS NOW VANISHED
TEMPLE AT MEMPHIS.**

This statue as it lies is about 25 feet long without the crown which stands beyond the head.



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But once in many years it happens that all these various calenders agree in keeping holiday on the same day. This was the case on our Easter Monday of 1906. It was also Easter Monday for the Egyptians, Greeks, and Latins, and some Jewish festival as well ; but above all it was Sham-el-Nessim, the old Egyptian spring festival, which has never ceased to be celebrated here from time immemorial by the indigenous population, whatever their religion may happen to be at the time of its occurrence. I think this is the only day in the year, and that at long intervals, when all Egypt makes holiday together.

There are three other ancient Egyptian festivals which all Egyptians celebrate, whether Christian or Mohammedan, though, while Sham-el-Nessim is more particularly Christian in that its date is fixed by the Egyptian Easter Monday, the other two are called Mohammedan festivals. Yet both, like the Sham-el-Nessim, go by the Egyptian and not the Arabian calender, and both are really survivals from the pagan worship, being connected with the Nile.

One is now known as the Embabeh Fair, but the Egyptians can tell you its real significance. On the night of the 11th of Bauneh (June 18) a single drop falls from heaven into the Nile, and so blesses and begins the rise of the flood which is to regenerate the earth. In the old Egyptian religion the falling drops were called the tears of Isis, weeping for Osiris, who has been slain by Typhon and

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seventy-two companions (the days of drought). In Christian times it seems probable, from accounts which have come down to us, that solemn services were held on this night; and sundry experiments and calculations were made in order to foretell the probable height of the year's flood. Now it is just a village fair, which the Mohammedans believe to be in honour of a certain Shiekh Embabeh, who, if he ever existed, was probably a Christian saint. But the Moslems also call the night Leilet-el-Nuktah, or the Night of the Drop.

The other is the old festival of the marriage of the Nile with his bride, the land of Egypt. In the last few years this festival has lost all its old picturesqueness, and in a short time its original significance will be forgotten; for, since the filling up of the ancient canal by the English on sanitary grounds, it has lost its distinctive character, and become an ordinary native mould. It is generally held either on the night of Saturday, the 22nd, or on the night of Sunday, the 23rd of August, at Foum-el-Khalig. But as it is sometimes held as early as the 15th, anyone wishing to attend it must make inquiries about August 10.

This festival, like the spring festival, dates from the days of the Pharaohs, and is Egyptian, not Mohammedan. In those far-away days the ceremony was intended to symbolize the marriage of the water with the earth, after which the earth brought forth her fruits in due season. (The earliest myth which grew up round the symbol

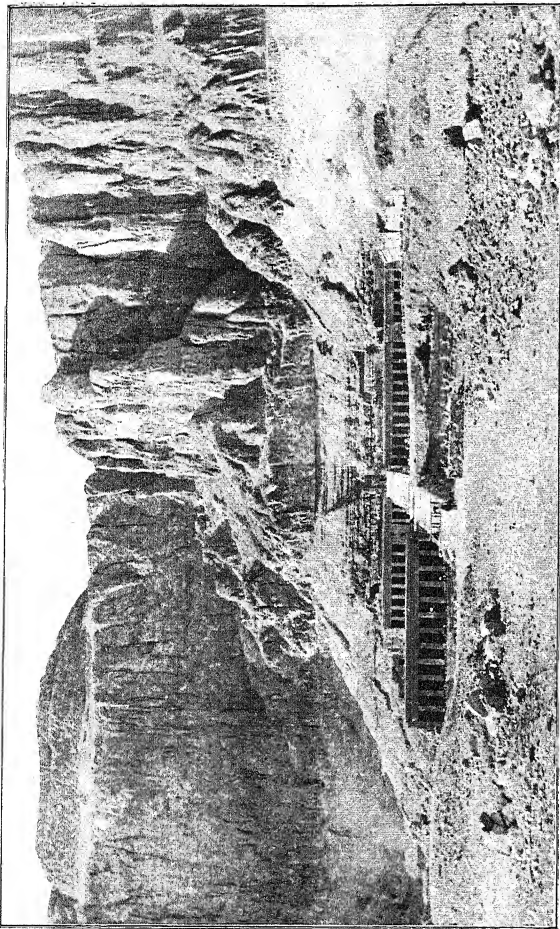
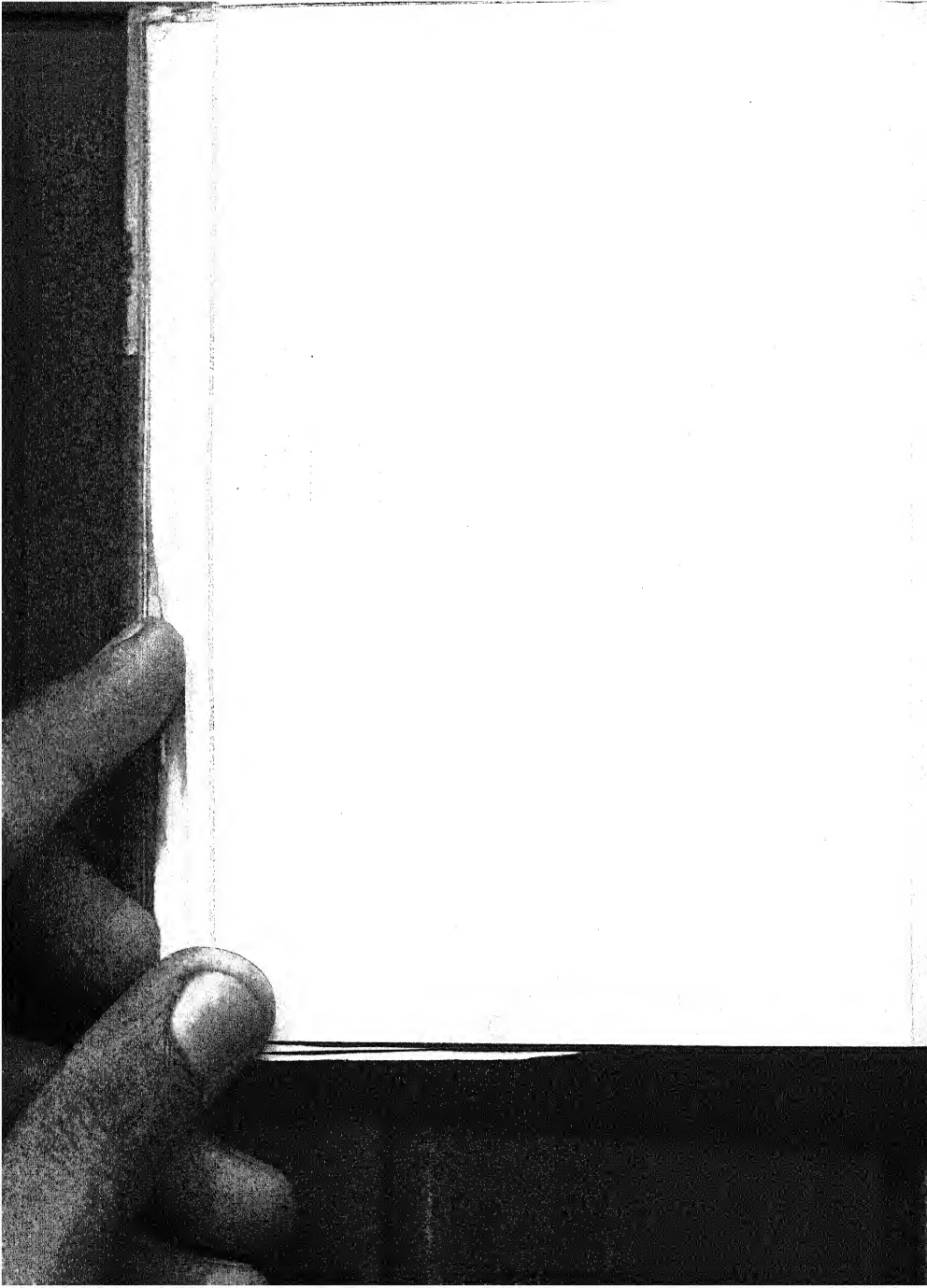


Photo by Will R. Rose.

QUEEN HATHOR'S TEMPLE AT THEBES.

This is not only one of the most beautiful, but also one of the most interesting temples in Egypt. It is built in the style which long after its erection was known as Greek.

Chester.



Some Egyptian Festivals

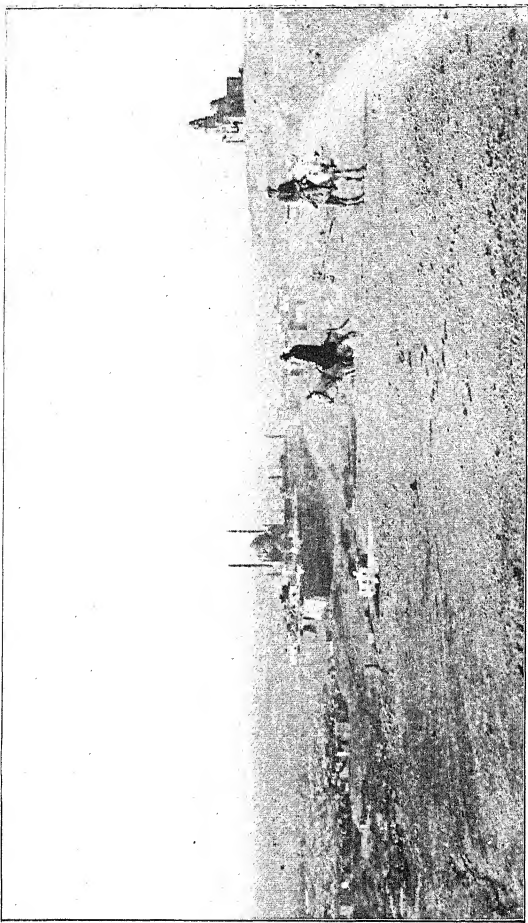
called it the union of Osiris and Isis.) The earth was wrought into the semblance of a woman which was called a bride, and decked as such. She stood in the dry bed of the Pharaonic canal, the same which was afterwards called the Amnis Trajanus, and in our own day the Khalig. Then the dam was cut, and the flood rushed in and carried away the earthmaiden in his embrace, while the people flung offerings into the water. The festival led to gross abuses, and when Egypt became Christian an attempt was made to abolish it. This was found impossible, so a more successful attempt was made to change its character.

The rising of the Nile was represented as due to the intercession of the Archangel Michael, whose festival occurs early in June, just at the time when the Nile generally begins to rise. For the marriage festival in August a Christian service of blessing the waters was substituted, and instead of the earthen figure, the mummied hand of a martyr—presumably a virgin martyr—was let down into the water to bless it. This hand was solemnly burnt in the presence of the Sultan by the Mohammedans in one of the many persecutions of the fourteenth century. After this, the festival, which both El Hakim (about 1012) and El Aziz (about 1194) had in vain endeavoured to suppress as a Christian one, fell almost entirely into the hands of the Mohammedans. Makrizi imagined that the accounts given to him of the earlier form of the festival referred to the sacrifice of a living virgin. This

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legend, written down by him, was soon as universally received as the equally incredible legend of Pope Joan in the West, and is still often repeated. Ebers gave fresh currency to the story by using it as the basis of his novel, "The Bride of the Nile." The earthen figure was revived by the Egyptians, as the mock wedding was not objected to by their conquerors. The bridal procession of boats had always been permitted, and still continues; the feast survives as a kind of water carnival, and many superstitions have grown round it. At one time the conduct of this national festival was given, one year to the Arabs, next year to the Egyptians, and the year after that to the Jews. It then became the custom for the Government to fix the celebration for a Saturday, and to fine the Jews because they were unable to take their turn.

There is a very ancient hymn to the Nile, written by Ennana, whose story of the two brothers is so well known. I need not say that it contains no hint of human sacrifice, nor, in the long course of Egyptian history, is there any allusion to such a practice in connection with this ceremony. Mention is, however, made of the sacrifice of oxen, gazelles, and birds, on the occasion of the Nile festival, just as they would have been slain on the occasion of any great Egyptian wedding. There is never the most distant allusion to any sacrifice of a virgin. More than once, however, the mention of the birds who cannot descend on the earth in



CAIRO FROM THE MOKATTAM HILLS.

The Mosque of El Gewshi is to be seen on the right, that of Mehemet Ali in the middle.



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the time of flood reminds one of the passage in Genesis.

A third festival connected with the Nile is the Youm-el-Selib, or Day of the Cross. This is to mark and celebrate the highest point of the Nile flood, and occurs about the end of September, or, by the Egyptian calender, about the middle of Tut (Thoth). But this festival became so entirely Christian that it almost lost its national character, and its public celebration on the banks of the Nile was forbidden after the invasion of the French, who, it will be remembered, posed as Moslems when they attempted to conquer Egypt (see the proclamations of Napoleon). After certain prayers and formalities, it had been the custom for a priest to throw one of the silver crosses belonging to his church into the turbulent water to sanctify it. Divers were in waiting, who contended for the honour of recovering it. This custom still lingers in some of the villages, and even where the inhabitants do not venture to celebrate the service in public it is often performed privately in the churches, like the similar festival of the Epiphany, or "the baptism of Christ."

The great yearly fair at Tintah, in August, has also come down from the ancient days, but it has long since lost all religious or national significance, though the Moslems call it the moulid (birthday) of the Sayid Ahmed-el-Bedawi. It is simply a great trading fair, very picturesque and very insanitary, which yearly becomes less important. At all these

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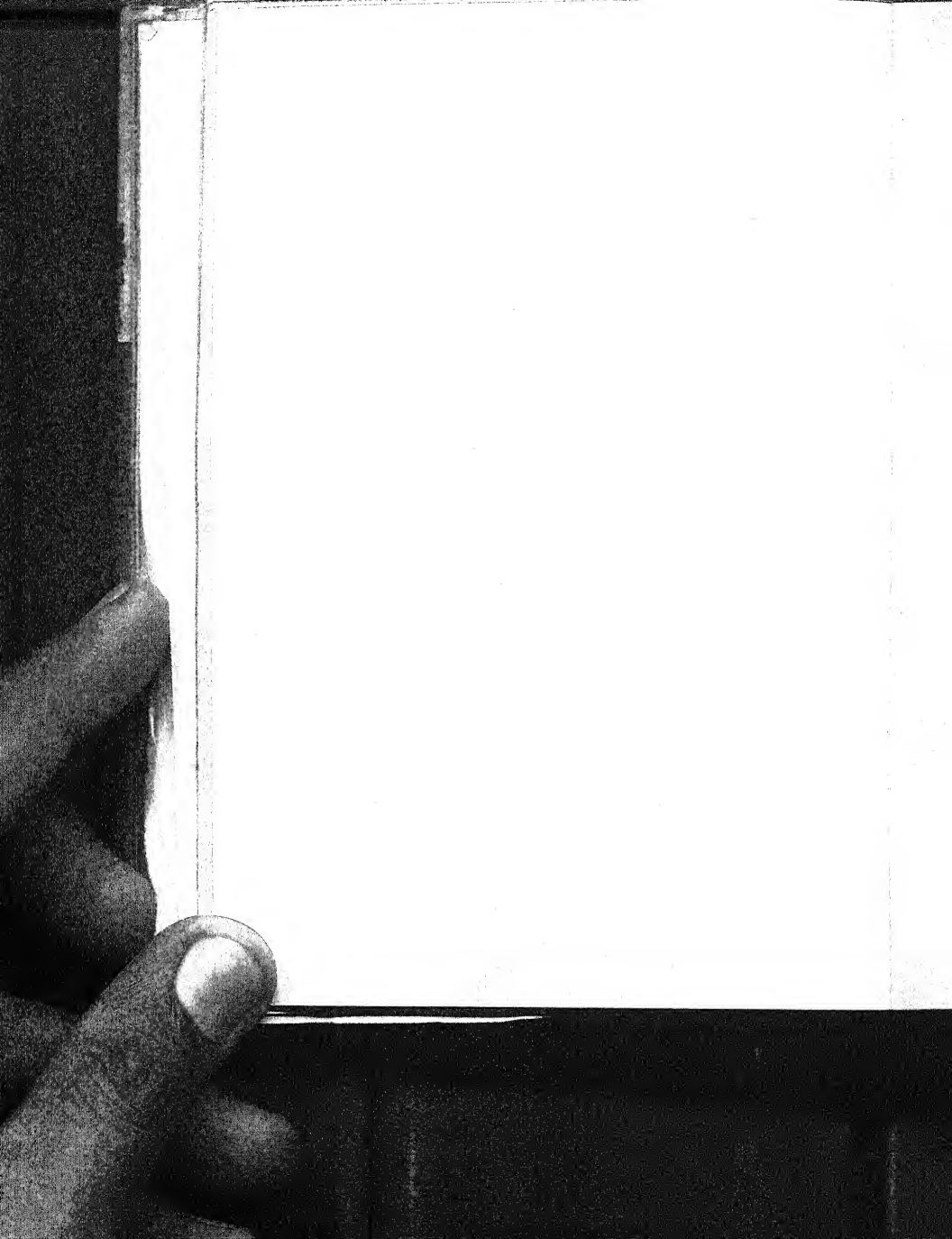
fairs may be seen the conjurers, the snake-charmers, the prize-fighters, dancing-girls, and puppet shows, which have always appeared at Egyptian fantasias. The conjurers are worth looking at ; oddly enough, one of the best in Cairo is now a woman.

Among the purely Mohammedan festivals celebrated in Egypt, the two most important for the sight-seer are the Moulid-el-Nubi and the Mahmal, or Procession of the Holy Carpet. There are also the two great feasts, called the Great Feast and the Little Feast, or, by the Europeans and Turks in Egypt, Greater and Lesser Bairam. Of course, as might be expected in Egypt, the Little Feast is much the greater, so far as observance and popular estimation is concerned. It marks the close of the month's fast of Ramadan, during which the Moslem population, as far as possible, turn night into day. They are not allowed to eat or drink anything during the day, so they make up for it at night, or after the sun has set. It is estimated that more food is consumed by them during the month of the fast than at any other time ; and it is interesting to watch them as the hour of gun-fire approaches. One of their number, in the European houses, where it is chiefly the servants who are concerned, or a larger group if it is a Moslem house, stand at the doorway to listen for the discharge. Almost simultaneously with the report there is a long-drawn " Ah !" of relief along the road, and the watcher disappears within more rapidly than at the call of any master to where his fellow-servants are



THE NILE.

Sunset on the Nile is not only one of the most marvellous sights of Egypt, but often yields singularly beautiful effects of light and shade.



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sitting round the prepared meal waiting for the signal to be given. After gun-fire there are not many left in the streets, but those who are still at work begin upon a radish or a handful of dates which are ready in their hands, and your driver stops at the nearest water-seller's, and reaches down for the readily proffered drink; after which he lights his first cigarette that day, and resumes his course, hoping that you are a person sufficiently instructed to know that a drive should not be prolonged after sunset in Ramadan. The feast after Ramadan lasts for three days.

The Copts make no fuss about their fasts, though they are far more severe and prolonged: forty days before Christmas, forty-five before Easter, forty after Pentecost; the three days' fast of Nineveh, and fifteen days in August in honour of the Virgin Mary, besides the Fridays. Sunset brings them no relief; what food they take, they take in the day, and go about their work as usual. Not only fish and flesh are forbidden, but milk, eggs, cheese, and butter as well. Nothing is permitted but fruit and vegetables, either raw or cooked in water, farinaceous food and plain bread; while in strict households nothing at all must be eaten before three o'clock in the afternoon. It is obvious that centuries of such a diet for nearly five months every year has been one principal cause of the weakened energy and stamina of the Copts.

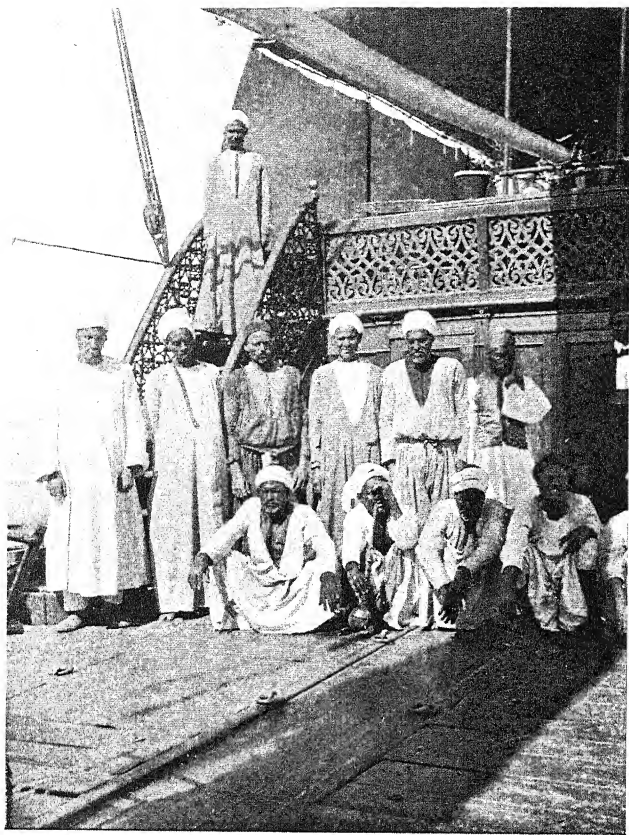
I was interested in a Coptic lad who was dis-

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missed after one year's service in the Government railway shops for failing sight, and sent him to an American oculist who had worked for many years among the poorer classes of Egyptians. His report was that he was afraid he could do nothing to save the boy's sight, which he would probably lose entirely in a year or two. He said such cases were constantly brought to him, and were all due to one cause, continual semi-starvation.

I knew that though the boy was fatherless and poor, his circumstances by no means forbade him to have sufficient nourishment ; so I made inquiries, and found that since childhood he had kept all the fasts of his Church. I sent for the boy's guardian, who was also his parish priest, and reasoned with him earnestly on the subject. He was a broad-minded and thoughtful man, and though it seemed to him a want of faith to suppose that God would allow a religious practice to harm his servant, he admitted that it was possible that such fasting was not acceptable to God, and promised to forbid his ward to fast, at any rate for a year or two. On this understanding I helped the boy to get work again. His sight gradually improved ; he was able in a few years to pass an examination, and has done well ever since.

Since the Copts came into contact with English and American Christianity, they have realized that such practices are far from being essential to Christianity, and are very generally giving them up. I believe, and am glad to believe, that very



THE CREW OF A DAHABEAH.

Their dress is picturesque, but scarcely sailorlike ; however, when they have to go aloft their outer garment is removed.



Some Egyptian Festivals

few Copts of the present day keep these terrible fasts, which date from the fourth and succeeding centuries.

The second great feast of the Mohammedans does not come after a fast, but corresponds with the festival at Mecca, and is held in the month of pilgrimage.

It is the great day of sacrifice, when thousands of animals are offered in the Valley of Muna, and is said to commemorate the sacrifice, or rather the intended sacrifice, by Abraham of his son, when a ram was substituted. But the Moslems say that this son was Ishmael, not Isaac. Everywhere throughout the Moslem world an animal is sacrificed on this day by all those who can possibly afford any one of the animals allowed for sacrifice. Everywhere in Egypt for two or three days before you may see the brown ram—the favourite sacrifice—tethered and fed in readiness.

No dates can be given which will be of any use to the visitor for these Mohammedan festivals, since, as I have already explained, they vary every year. During the thirty years of my stay in Egypt they revolved right round the year and came back to the same period again, having gained a year upon us in the process. Anyone who wishes to see them must buy a Government almanac—fortunate now in that he is able to do so—and find out for himself whether any of them will occur during his stay in Egypt.

The Moulid-el-Nubi is the feast or birthday of

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the Prophet. This has changed very much since the suppression of the doseh, but is still a very picturesque sight. A great camp is made outside Cairo—in recent years at Abbassieh—of handsomely decorated tents belonging to the Moslem notables and officials and the various sects of dervishes. Here you may still see the zikrs, which they are for the most part forbidden now to perform in public. A zikr is a formal attempt on the part of several men to induce self-hypnotism in a peculiar way. That is what it is; but, of course, that is not what it is called. It is regarded as an act of worship. The men sit in a circle—generally not a real circle, but a long ellipse—and one takes the lead. He recites certain phrases, chiefly the names and attributes of Allah, and accompanies it with swaying movements of the body which must be faithfully copied by all in the circle. Sometimes the phrase to be repeated consists only of one word, such as “Hu” (or “He” in English), and the leader continues on one phrase or ejaculation for several moments. By-and-by they work themselves up into a state of frenzy; some fall into trance, and some into convulsions. It was a zikr of this kind which the tourists used to go and see under the name of the “howling dervishes”; but that became so manifestly a public performance for money that the more religious Moslems were scandalized, and, I believe, succeeded in getting it forbidden. These zikrs are performed at most of the Moslem festivals, but the best time to see

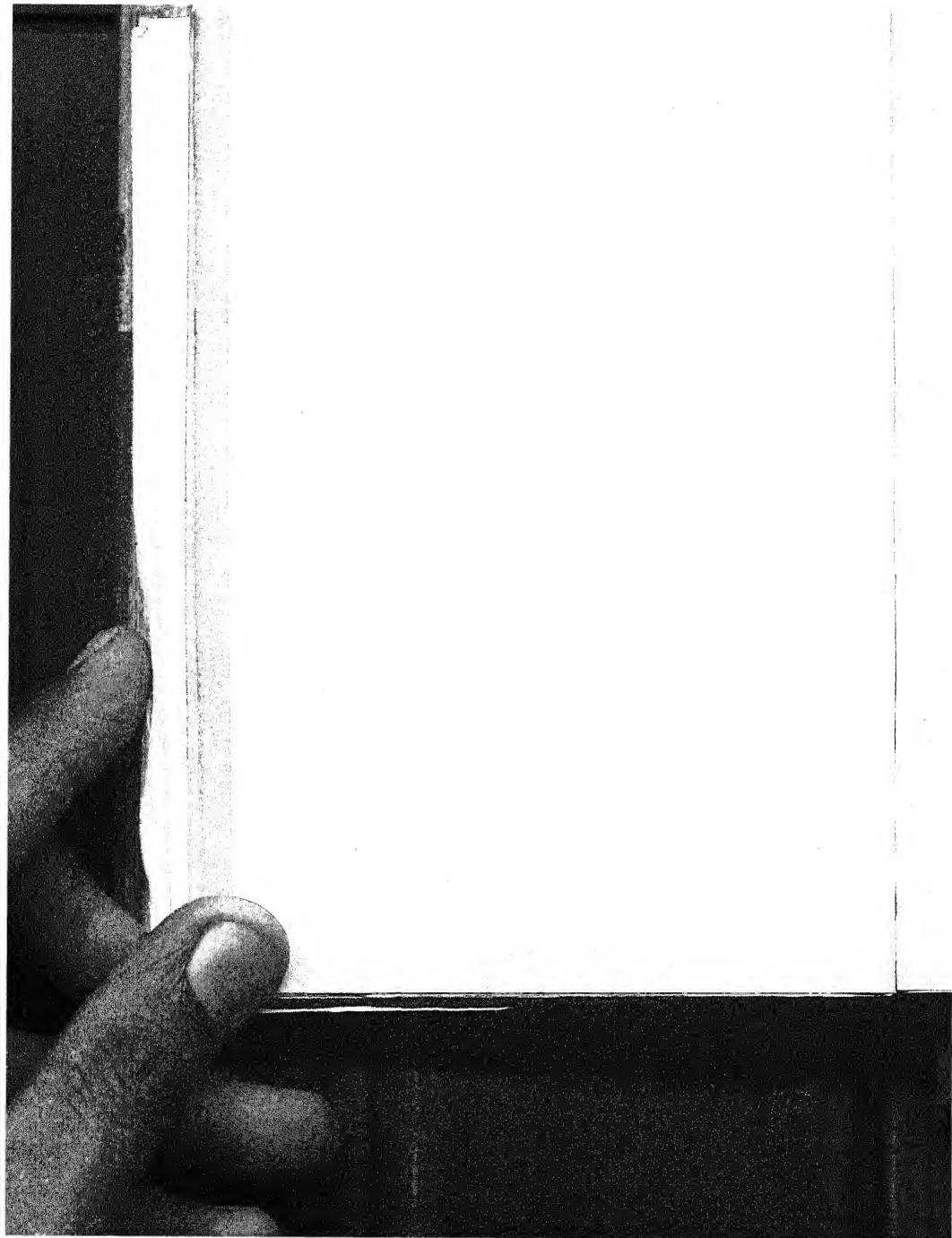


Photo by Will R. Rose.

Chester.

THE NILE BANK AT WADY SABA.

This is between the First and Second Cataracts. An empty bottle has been thrown from the steamer, and the boys are rushing into the water to get it. Bottles are treasures here.



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them is at the Moulid-el-Nubi. There is also a tremendous display of fireworks, through which Egyptian horses will stand without moving a muscle, though squibs actually splutter out on the driver's seat, and Syrian or European horses may be rearing all round. It is the fashion now to use always Syrian or European horses, but the superior self-control of the Egyptian renders him very valuable on occasion.

Besides the fireworks and the zikrs, there are all the usual accompaniments of a native fair at these festivals, and sweet stalls, for which, in spite of the Moslem prohibition against making the likeness of anything that has life, the Egyptian still makes in sugar images of men and women, beasts and birds. One of the most popular entertainments is the native swing, a curious erection on the principle of our "wheels," where divans full of men and boys go up and down and round with huge enjoyment. Puppet and peep shows are always to be seen, and naked prize-fighters are not unknown.

The prettiest of all these "fantasias" is the Procession of the Carpet, or, as it is commonly called, "The Mahmal." In a slightly varied form the procession takes place three times in the year: once when the kisweh, or carpet, is taken to the mosque, where a special guild of workers embroider it; once when it is packed and taken in the Mahmal to salute the Khedive before starting on the pilgrimage; and once on the return of the pilgrims,

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when the carpet that was taken to Mecca the year before is brought back to Cairo. It is always called the Carpet, but being in Egypt, I need hardly say it is not a carpet. It is a set of new hangings for the walls of the mosque at Mecca, of the stiffest possible black silk—black because that is the colour of the Abbasside dynasty—embroidered heavily with gold. The embroiderers are a special guild of men with a peculiar and picturesque dress, and the work is done within the precincts of a mosque.

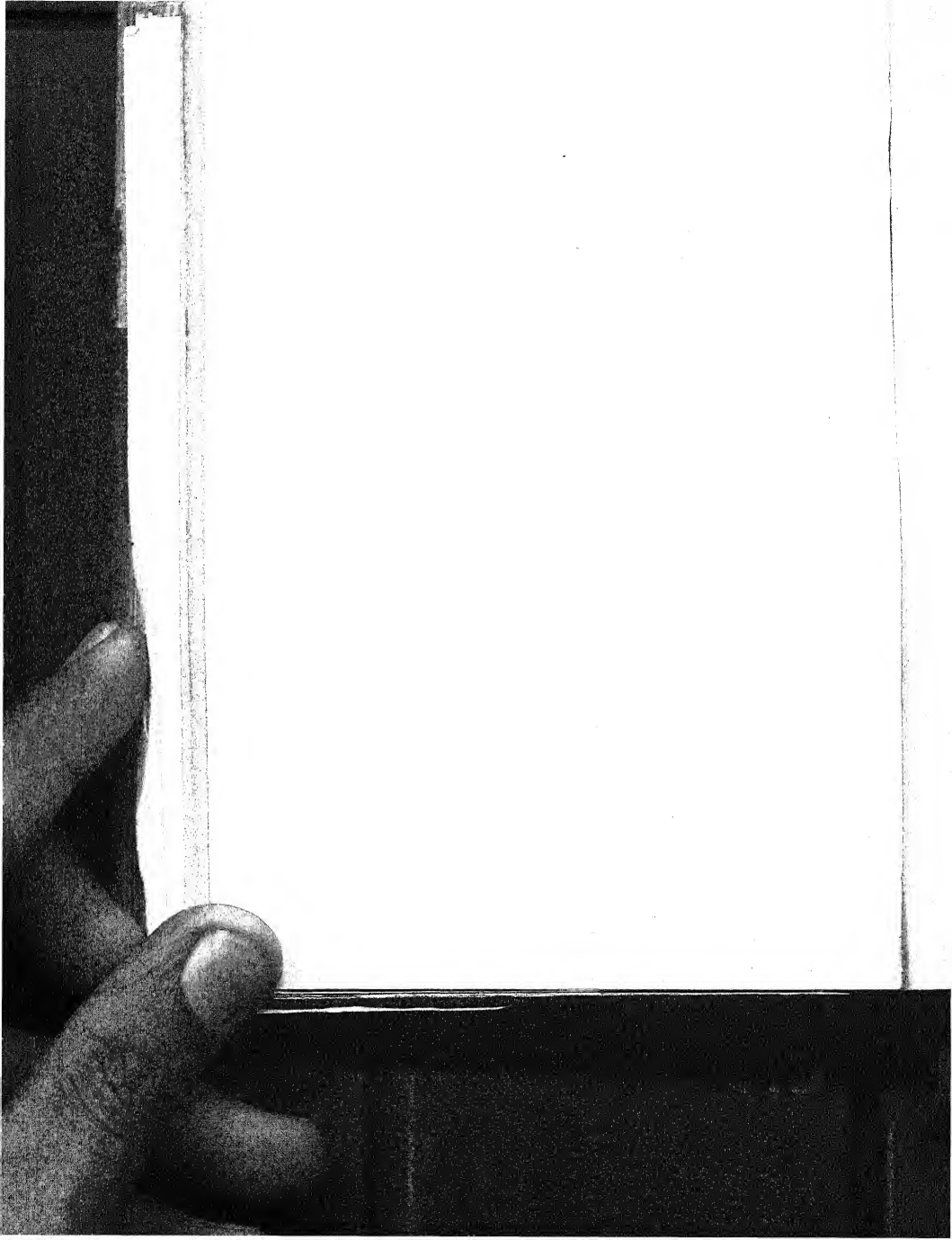
The best place to see the show is from the open Meidan below the citadel, whence the official start is made. You start early in the morning, and drive up the straight, ugly Mohammed Ali street which was drawn with a ruler across the map of that part of Cairo, and every house on the line marked pulled down. All along the way are parties of dervishes carrying the banners of their guilds and chanting as they go. Then a Pasha in a gold-embroidered coat, with his syce running before him, drives along in his victoria. Then two big troopers belonging to our military police ride slowly by with an elaborate air of being where they are accidentally. No British regiment takes part in the pageant; it is Egyptian from beginning to end. Though shabby and hideous, the street of Mohammed Ali terminates superbly, for it passes between the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, the gem of Saracenic architecture, and the stately Mosque of Rifāiyeh, unfortunately not finished. Then we



ONE OF THE COLOSSI OF THEBES.

Both the Colossi were erected by Amenoph III. By a cunning device the priests used to make mysterious noises to come from the interiors.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



Some Egyptian Festivals

emerge into an open place, and before us rise the citadel and the great mosque where the founder of the present dynasty lies buried. Every battle-ment, every flight of steps, every parapet, every coign of vantage is crowded with men and women all aglow with excitement and pleasure, and dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, as if long garlands of flowers were laid about the old buildings. Finally the carriages take up a place in the midst of the most good-humoured crowd in the world. A tattered beggar asks for baksheesh, a travelling fruit-seller offers us pistachio nuts, and the inevitable water-carrier, with his tinkling brass cup, invites us to drink. But they all take a courteous "No" for an answer, and leave us to watch the procession. The theatre, wherein the pageant is displayed, is an open space beneath the towering citadel, and the centre-point of the ceremony is now a little wooden kiosk; it was once a rich crimson velvet tent, where the Khedive or his representative takes his state. The Egyptian soldiers, in white uniforms and red tarbouches, keep the ground, and in their midst, swaying to and fro, is the howdah, or covered litter, ablaze with spangles and gold, on the hump of a camel that will do no more work after bearing that holy burden. And this howdah, a square frame with a pyramidal top—not the carpet, as is popularly supposed—goes by the name which popularly describes the whole pageant, the Mahmal.

At last there is a stir in the crowd—that

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peculiar movement we all know when a multitude, as it were, pulls itself together before the event of the day takes place. Driving rapidly, with mounted escort, the Khedive comes up, or his Prime Minister, if he should happen to be away. The act performed by the Khedive or his deputy is simple. Directly he arrives at the kiosk, he salutes and is saluted by the high functionaries. These great ones are a strangely contrasted group. Some are dressed in regulation black frock-coats, some in uniforms covered with embroidery, others, like the Sheikh-el-Islam or the Sheikh-el-Saddatt, sit sublime in robes of silk and turbans worthy of Abdallah-el-Hadji in "The Talisman." After salutations given and received the music bursts out, and the camel, with its glittering howdah or tabernacle flashing in the sun, goes round and round sometimes three, sometimes seven times, while the dervishes on the attendant camels utter their strange shrill note of joy, and all the spectators echo the sound, and thrill with excitement and sympathy.

At last the camel is brought up, very dizzy probably, before the steps of the little kiosk, and the officer in charge of the pilgrimage takes a crimson cord which hangs from the Mahmal, and places it in the hand of the Khedive's representative, who kisses it reverently and wishes the Hadj "God speed." Loudly boom the kettledrums, shrilly sound the pipes, and the cannon thunder a royal salute from overhead as the procession starts

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on its way through the murmuring, rejoicing multitude on the first stage to Mecca. This stage is not a long one, but only as far as Abbassieh, where they will all repose for a day and a half, and then the gay trappings of the camels will be taken off, and the housings sewn with beads and the head-stalls glittering with scraps of looking-glass will be unbuckled; and, soberly equipped like

“Warriors for the working day,”

the *bona-fide* pilgrims will really start, and the properties that are brought out every year for the great fantasia of the Mahmal will be stowed away until they are next wanted.

After the Mahmal itself follows a larger or smaller procession, according to whether it is the first or second progress of the carpet. On the first occasion it is not packed up in the howdah, but displayed on wooden frames, which are carried by relays of natives. There will often be one or two of the beautiful old litters in which great Moslem ladies used to go on pilgrimage with a suitable retinue. These are slung between two camels, gaily caparisoned in scarlet cloth, like all the rest who take part in the procession. The camels are one behind, the other before the litter, and the ladies, though secluded themselves, have a good view of everything that goes on.

The pilgrims go by train to Suez, and then take steamer to Jeddah. It was a sad blow to the old conservatism of Islam when the holy carpet and

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the holy people were thrust into railway carriages. Sinister rumour says that a telegraph-wire injured the pyramid-shaped top of the Mahmal, which was a bad omen ; but, fortunately, nothing came of it. As it is, even in these days of comparative luxury, the pilgrims brave many hardships. They suffer from fatigue and heat and close-packing, and the fevers generated by these conditions ; but those who do get back are happy men, and troops of friends will hail their returning feet.

When the chief dangers of the long journey are over, and the pilgrims are well on their homeward way, they will write letters to their fathers and brothers and all their home-keeping kinsfolk, pouring forth gratitude to God, who, by the mouth of His servant Abraham,* enjoined men to make a pilgrimage to the house of their God.

Then those friends who have stayed behind paint on the whitewashed walls of the houses pictures of locomotive engines, and ships, and palm-trees, and raging lions, to show how the occupant has travelled by land and sea, and has braved dangers from wild beasts, but is now returned safe and sound ; and when he is nigh to the city they bring him on his way with torches and music, so that the coming back, as well as the going forth, of the Mahmal is a time of festivity and joy.

A curious incident took place on the first occasion on which the ceremony was performed

* Koran, chap. xxiii., or the Pilgrimage.

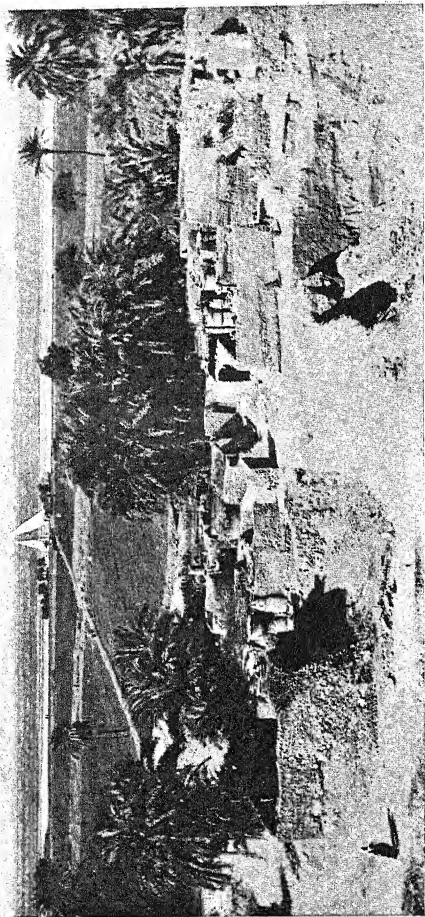
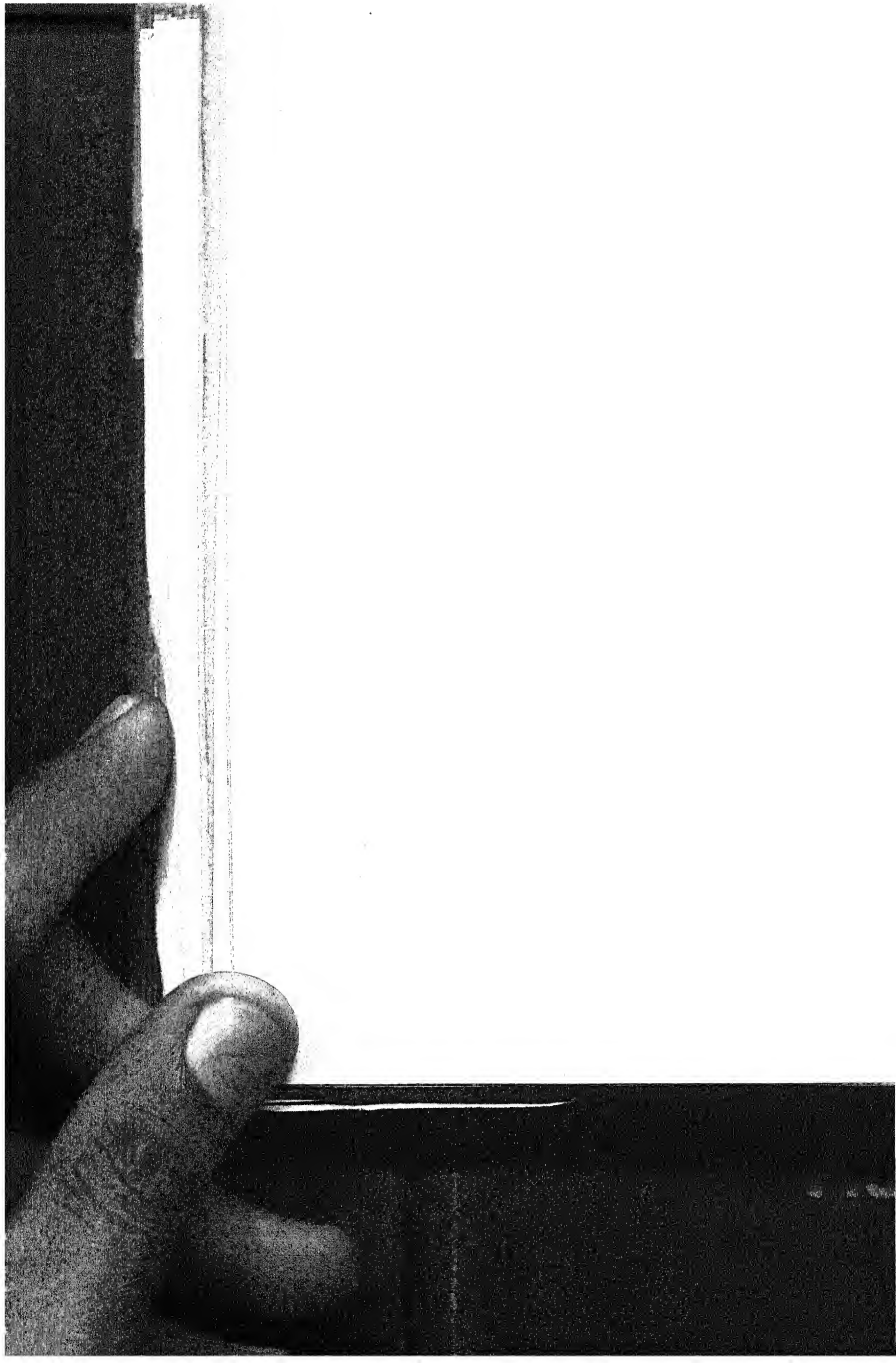


Photo by Will R. Rose.

THEBES AND THE NILE, FROM KARNAK.

In the foreground is a native village, and the Theban mountains may be seen in the distance.

Cluster.



Some Egyptian Festivals

after Egypt had been occupied by British troops. There was practically no Egyptian army or police at the time, and there was some danger of a fanatical outbreak. On the pretext, therefore, of doing special honour to the occasion, the Khedive was informed that the British army would parade in the Square, and take charge of the procession. But in giving this order the authorities had reckoned without Tommy, and very soon found their mistake. Tommy was not quite so well educated then as he is now, and believed that when he was told to salute the Mahmal, he was told to join in an act of idolatrous worship to a heathen idol. So Tommy—all honour to him for it—flatly refused. Collectively and individually he gave his officers to understand that in this matter he could not obey them. “Be it known unto thee”—perhaps that utterance of supreme faith rang in the hearts of some of them—“that we will *not* worship the golden image.”

There were hasty and secret consultations among the high authorities, who were supposed to know nothing of Tommy's intimation, and an ingenious compromise was arrived at. It was arranged that directly the Khedive had sped the Mahmal with the accustomed ceremony, he should at once enter his carriage, and drive across and away on the other side of the Square from that on which the Mahmal passed. The few Egyptian troops in the Square kept their faces to the Mahmal and reverently salaamed. The British troops turned as one man

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and saluted the Khedive, presenting the hind-quarters of their horses squarely to the Mahmal.

There is perhaps hardly a religion or nationality in the world which does not find its representative somewhere either in Cairo, Alexandria, or Assouan. But all the Egyptians proper belong to one of the three great religions of the modern world—Christian, Jewish, or Mohammedan. Of these, by far the greater majority are Moslems, though several thousands belong to the old Melkite form of the Greek Church, and about a million* to the old National Church of Egypt. These are the people commonly known as Copts—a mispronunciation of the ancient name *Ægypt*, or *Egypt*. The Jewish element in the nation is comparatively small. Certain customs and ceremonies which have come down to them from their forefathers in ancient Egypt are common to all three. The cat is still held in more or less reverence, and I do not think that any native would put one to death. The custom of animal sacrifice still continues, though there is generally some excuse made, particularly among the Christians, who will readily disavow any religious significance, and say that it is merely an old custom to kill a beast on certain occasions and give the flesh to the poor. This, however, would hardly account for the way the animal is sacrificed—as in the case of a bride for instance. When

* The last census, of course, makes their number less than this. The Egyptian Christians do not yet realize that they need not try any more to conceal or minimize their numbers.

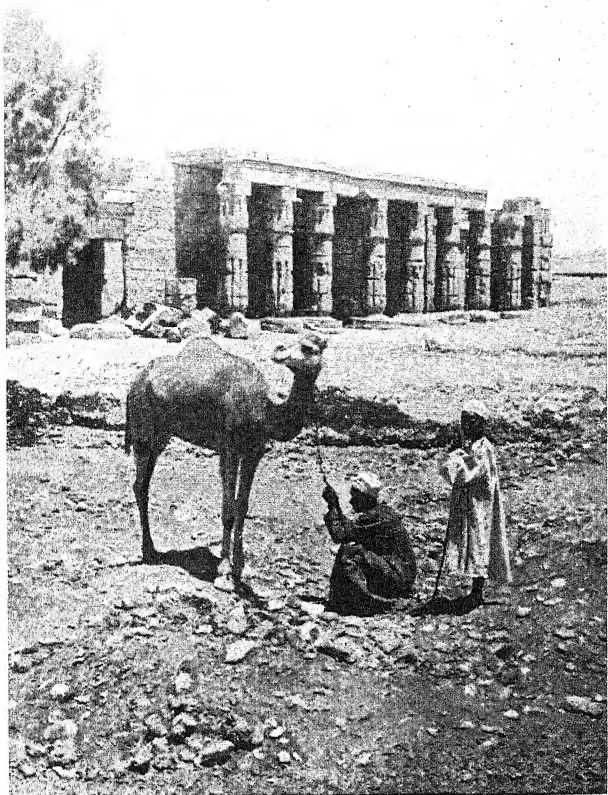
Some Egyptian Festivals

people went leisurely up the Nile in dahabiehs, an animal was always sacrificed when they arrived safely at the first cataract; but to the European traveller it was represented merely as a "back-sheesh" from him to the crew that they might feast and be merry. The Moslem attaches more importance to these sacrifices than the Christian, and as a rule believes that evil will befall him if they are neglected. A new house must never be occupied by the owner till the sacrifice has been duly offered upon the threshold. I have been told that if an Englishman is sufficiently well loved, his servants will make the sacrifice at least of a cock at their own expense for him without his knowledge sooner than he should suffer. In the great museum in Cairo, which no tourist would dream of leaving unvisited, and where you can, as it were, walk through the history of Egypt for some 7,000 years (the last 700 must be studied in the "Arab" Museum), models of new houses may be found with the slain sacrifice across the threshold.

Among the many ancient myths of which explanations are suggested in that wonderful collection, you recognize with a start of surprise that which describes Venus as rising out of the sea. In one of the rooms there is a shrine which was dug almost intact out of the great temple of Deyr-el-Bahri only a few years ago. It contains the representation of Hathor, whom the Greeks identified with Aphrodite, or Venus, coming up out of the Nile, or sea (the word for the Nile and the

Things Seen in Egypt

sea is the same), with the lotus and river reeds about her. The goddess is represented in the form of a cow, and one remembers also the kine that "came up out of the river" in Pharaoh's dream. But the Venus that we see rising out of the sea in the Cairo Museum was carved by order of the great Queen who reigned in Egypt centuries before Homer sang of the immortal gods of Greece.



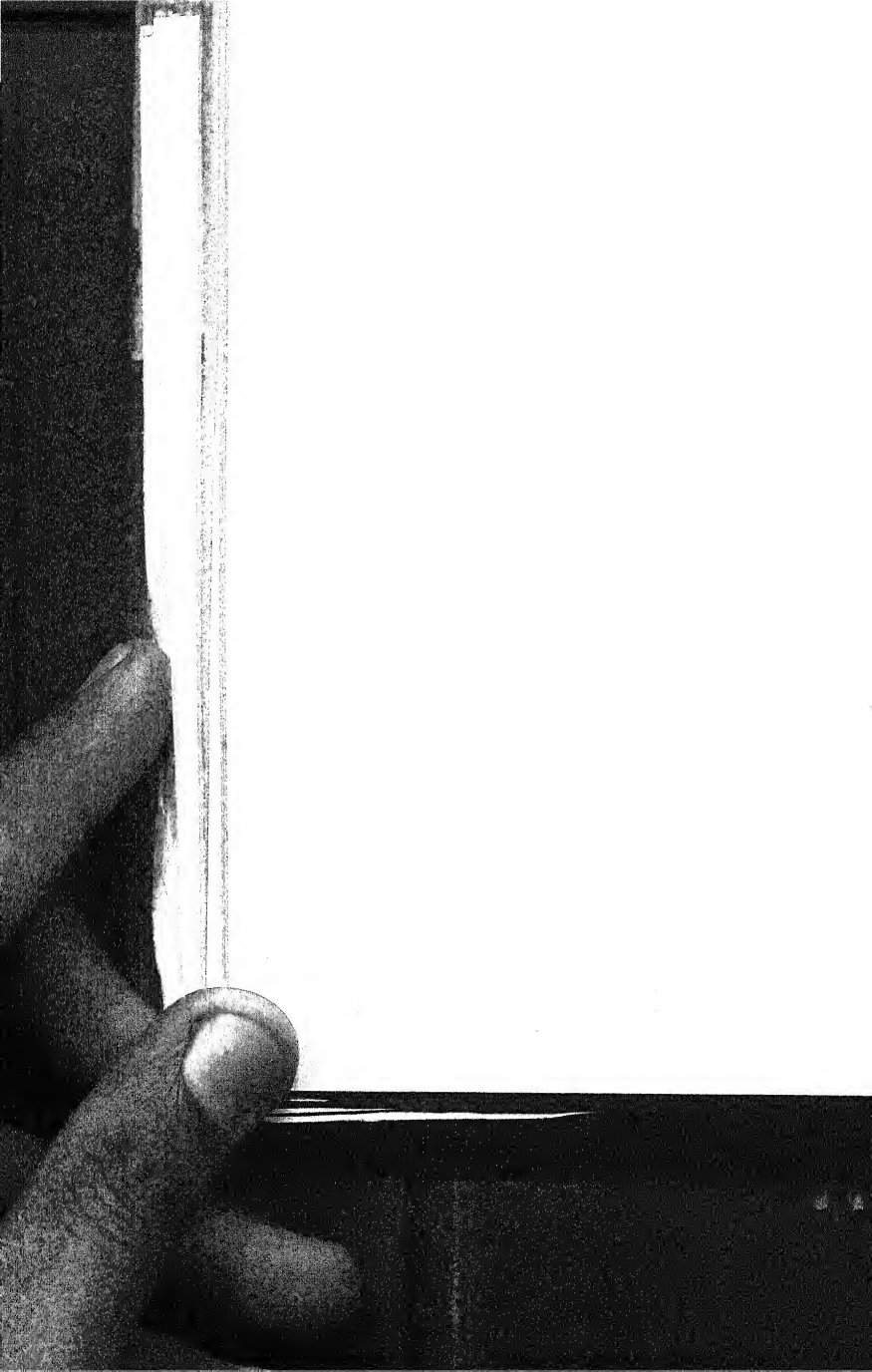
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THE TEMPLE OF SETI I. AT THEBES.

This temple dates from the middle of the fourteenth century B.C. It is a mortuary temple, and is really a composite chapel for the Kings of three generations—Ramses I., Seti I., and Ramses II.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



CHAPTER VII

THE FIVE CITIES

IN Cairo itself, apart from the Museum, there is but little to be seen of the great Empire which dominated the ancient world. But though there is so little, there is enough to give the traveller a unique experience—one which perhaps no other spot in the world can give him. In one day's sight-seeing he can include the actual and visible remains of a town life which has lasted for at least 6,000 years, and probably longer. From more than one point of view he can even embrace the five towns—Pharaonic, Early Christian, Arabic, Medieval, and Modern—in one comprehensive glance. The best point, perhaps, is from the lofty minarets of Ebn Touloun. There is a less-known point of view which is very beautiful, from the little hill outside the Roman fortress, one of the rubbish-heaps of ruined Babylon. One of the many windmills which were erected here—it is said by the French—crowns the summit and affords a little shelter from the prevailing wind. From here we can see the plain right out to the Gizeh Pyramids, and the sites of Memphis, Babylon,

Things Seen in Egypt

Fostat, and even Cairo lie open before us; while close below us we have a good view of the Roman fortress and its old water-gate. There was, twenty years ago, a Roman Eagle carved above the sunken gate, but it has vanished like so much else. The view from the citadel hill is, of course, well known to everyone, and those who can are advised to climb to the top of the steep hill behind it.

The centre of Egyptian life since the time of Mena has been fixed at the apex of the Delta, but the gradual shifting process has been from south to north, not from east to west, as with most great towns. The first of the five towns on this rallying-point of Egypt was Memphis, the scanty remains of which are covered by the palm-groves between the river and Sakhara. Among these palms the principal objects to be seen are the colossal statue of Rameses II., which lies prostrate and broken near the track, and a few stones of the great temple of Ptah, on the shore of the village pond, all that remains of the sacred lake. Professor Petrie is now excavating among these palms, but not much has been found yet except some statues. This was the great city founded by Mena at a date variously estimated from 5000 to 4750 B.C. The only evidence we have still to be seen of its former size and importance is the Necropolis, which stretches across the desert from Sakhara to Gizeh, the most wonderful cemetery in the world. Memphis itself was used as a quarry for about a thousand years after the most important part of

The Five Cities

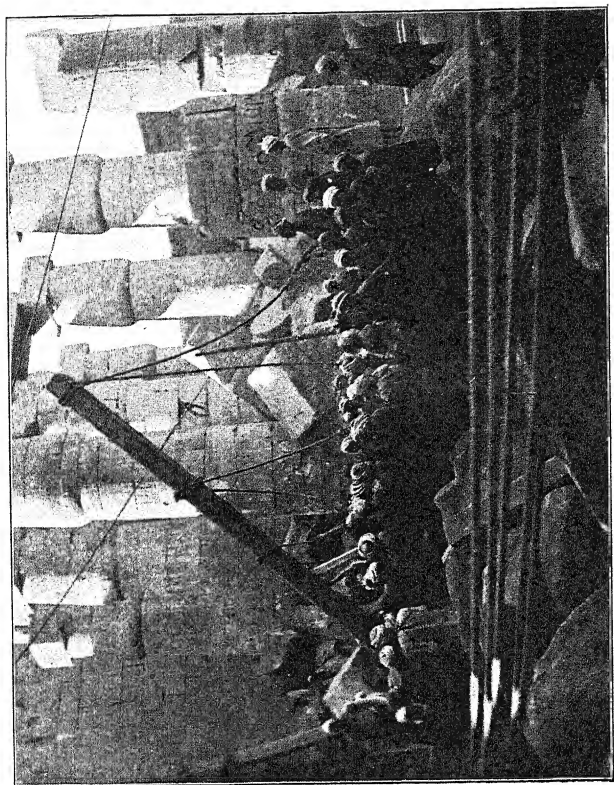
the city had shifted across the Nile. This happened partly because of the river, partly because of trade, and partly because, after the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, the growing city on the east bank to the north was made, so far as we can gather, the political capital as well. This second city was called Babylon, and the capital of Egypt was known by this name down to the close of the thirteenth century. The actual city of Babylon was deliberately burnt about a hundred years earlier, when the Franks invaded Egypt under Amaury, and the Moslem who then reigned in Egypt feared that the inhabitants of Babylon—a Christian and already half-ruined city—would rise to join with the Christian invaders. There are very few ruins of Babylon left, but one very important one is still occupied—the old Roman fortress built by Trajan to replace a still earlier fortress of Babylon further south, of which hardly a trace remains. This Roman fortress has been in great part destroyed in our own time, but the old water-gate on the south side has been cleared out, and may still be seen. In this Roman fortress are clustered six of the oldest churches left in Egypt, one of which, sunk in the course of centuries beneath the ground, and used as a crypt to a later church built over it, probably dates from the first century. This is the only Coptic church that the ordinary tourist ever sees, but though of intense interest historically, it is not nearly so beautiful as some of the others.

Things Seen in Egypt

Whatever may be said of the existing walls and pillars in the crypt, there is little doubt that we have here the site of the oldest church in the world. This part of Babylon, long before the fortress was built, was the Jewish quarter of the city, founded, or raised to the rank of capital of the kingdom, by Nebuchadnezzar; and to friends or relations settled here the infant Jesus is said to have been brought by His parents. To this Babylon Peter came accompanied by Mark, whom he apparently sent on alone to Alexandria. But the Jewish synagogue, which, after many changes and vicissitudes, is still a Jewish synagogue in this quarter of ruined Babylon, claims to go back to the time of the prophet Jeremiah, and shows his tomb. Jeremiah, we know, did die in Egypt, but his dwelling-place is generally supposed to have been at Taphanes.

The name of Memphis only survives in the pages of history; that of Babylon still survives, not in the Roman fortress, but applied to a collection of mud hovels surrounding an ancient church which still exists on the desolate site of the city further south, and is known as Deyr Babloun.

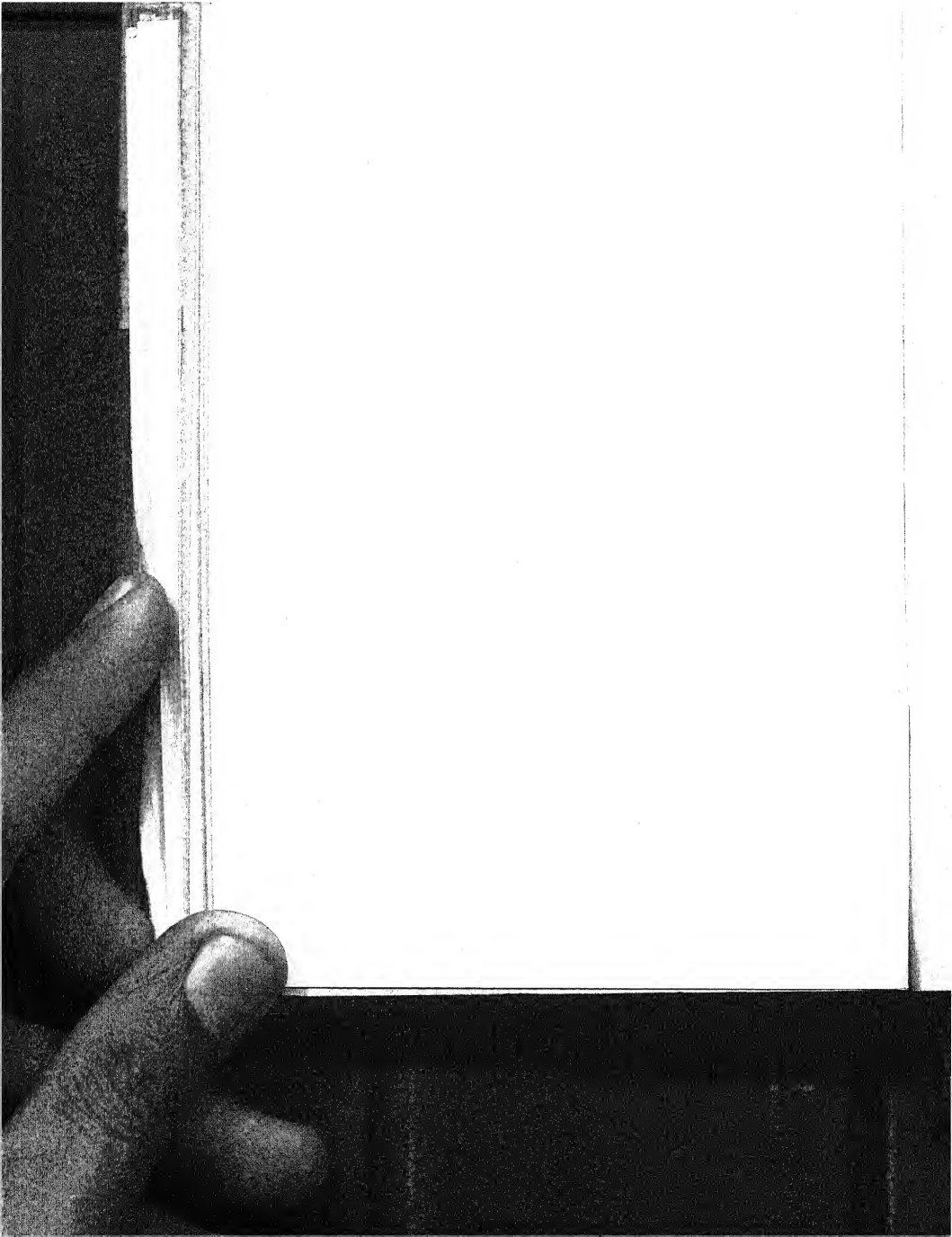
The next town of this five-fold city was built at the time of the Arab conquest, and called Fostat, because it developed from the camp of the invading army. A good deal of this town still exists in a ruinous condition, and under the extremely inaccurate name of Old Cairo; but there is probably no building now standing which goes back



NATIVE METHODS OF WORKING AT KARNAK.

They use practically the same methods as their progenitors 4,000 years ago.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



The Five Cities

to the time of the Arab conquest. The site of the original mosque built by Amr ibn Aas is there, and should certainly be visited by the wanderer, but the actual building which is shown him as the Mosque of Amr dates from the tenth and eleventh centuries. Still, the first mosque ever built in Egypt undoubtedly stood on this spot, and on the great Friday of Ramadan in each year the Moslem ruler of Egypt must go in state to offer up the prescribed worship there. The original mosques were open courts, with little beyond the four walls; the minarets and cloisters and, finally, the whole plan of the Coptic churches were adopted in building mosques as the centuries rolled on. All the pillars which stand in the present mosque were taken by violence from the Christian churches of Babylon, with the exception of those used in the latest restoration a few years ago. The Arab city of Fostat was built round and to the north of this mosque.

In the Arab Museum may still be seen the oldest copy of the Koran in Egypt, probably the oldest in the world. It was written for this mosque, and was found there during one of the restorations. It is in Kufic character, and tradition says that it was written by a son-in-law of the Prophet. When found it was in a terribly damaged condition, and only about half of the book remains. It is instructive to compare this with the later copies of the Koran, which increase in beauty of workmanship as the Moslem conquerors learnt to turn

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the artistic skill of the Egyptians to their own account.

The next of the five cities also marks a new conquest of the country, or, at any rate, a fresh epoch—the establishment of Egypt as an independent kingdom under a Turk, Ahmed Ebn Touloun. He had been sent as Governor to Egypt about A. D. 868, but in a few years made himself absolute master of the country, and proclaimed himself Sultan—the first to assume that title in Egypt, or Babylon, as it was then called by Europeans. Having procured the recognition of his independent sovereignty by an immense bribe (he is said to have found in one ancient tomb alone treasure worth 1,000,000 dinars, or £600,000), he proceeded to lay out for himself a new city north of Fostat, and lying further east, nearer to the Mokattam Hills than the river. A large part of this site had been used for centuries as the burial-place of Jews and Christians, but this presented no obstacle to Ahmed Ebn Touloun. He gave orders that all tombs were to be demolished, and the material was used in his own constructions.

The new town was surrounded with walls and gates, and a magnificent palace, of which, as usual, no trace remains, was built for the new Sultan. He devoted much care to the water-supply of his new city, and, rejecting sundry expedients suggested to him, sent for the best architect in the kingdom, and desired him to bring water into the new city in a form which should be at once

The Five Cities

effectual, beautiful, and lasting. The architects and mathematicians of Egypt have always been Copts, and Ahmed Ebn Touloun could find no Moslem capable of the work. The name of the Christian whom he employed is said to have been Ibn Katib el Farghani, afterwards a martyr for his faith. He sunk a shaft to a great depth in the Southern desert, and brought the water to the new town on a lofty aqueduct of innumerable arches, much like the one which, in later times, Saladin constructed to bring water to his citadel. Both aqueducts may be seen to this day. The later one is known to every Egyptian tourist; the earlier one is rarely visited: it crosses the desert to the east of Babylon and Fostat.

This aqueduct was considered one of the greatest wonders of its day, and when it was finished Ebn Touloun rode out in state to see it. But one of the workmen had carelessly left a heap of loose building material in the wrong place, and the Sultan's horse stumbled and fell with him. Ebn Touloun was not hurt, but the fall was a bad omen, and he was angry. Instead of paying the Christian architect for his work, he had him immediately arrested and thrown into prison, where he remained for some time.

But when he was firmly established in Egypt as an independent Sultan, and all fear of a retributive invasion on behalf of the Kaliph was over, Ebn Touloun determined to build a mosque for his new city which should surpass in size and magnificence

Things Seen in Egypt

all others in Egypt. He also desired his mosque to be acceptable to Allah, and it was therefore to be built in strict accordance with the rules laid down in the Koran. The Koran was brought and solemnly read before the Sultan, that there might be no mistake. But when the command was read which absolutely forbade any stolen material whatever to be used in the construction of a mosque, Ebn Touloun cried out that such a command was impossible. Did anyone ever hear of a beautiful mosque being built without at least the pillars for its colonnade being taken from the Christian churches? Where else was it possible to obtain them? This one infraction of the law must needs be forgiven.

The news of the Sultan's perplexity soon spread, and doubtless the Christians feared that a Moslem authority would soon be found who would persuade the Sultan that spoliation of the infidels was not theft, and might safely be indulged in. But the famous Christian architect, languishing in prison, was quick to seize his opportunity. He sent to assure the Sultan that if the latter would release him, he would undertake to build a larger mosque with a finer colonnade than any before seen, and yet to observe faithfully the right condition that no stolen material should be used. Ebn Touloun liberated him on trial, and the architect, by the simple expedient, which apparently had occurred to no one else, of building piers instead of stealing pillars produced the desired effect.

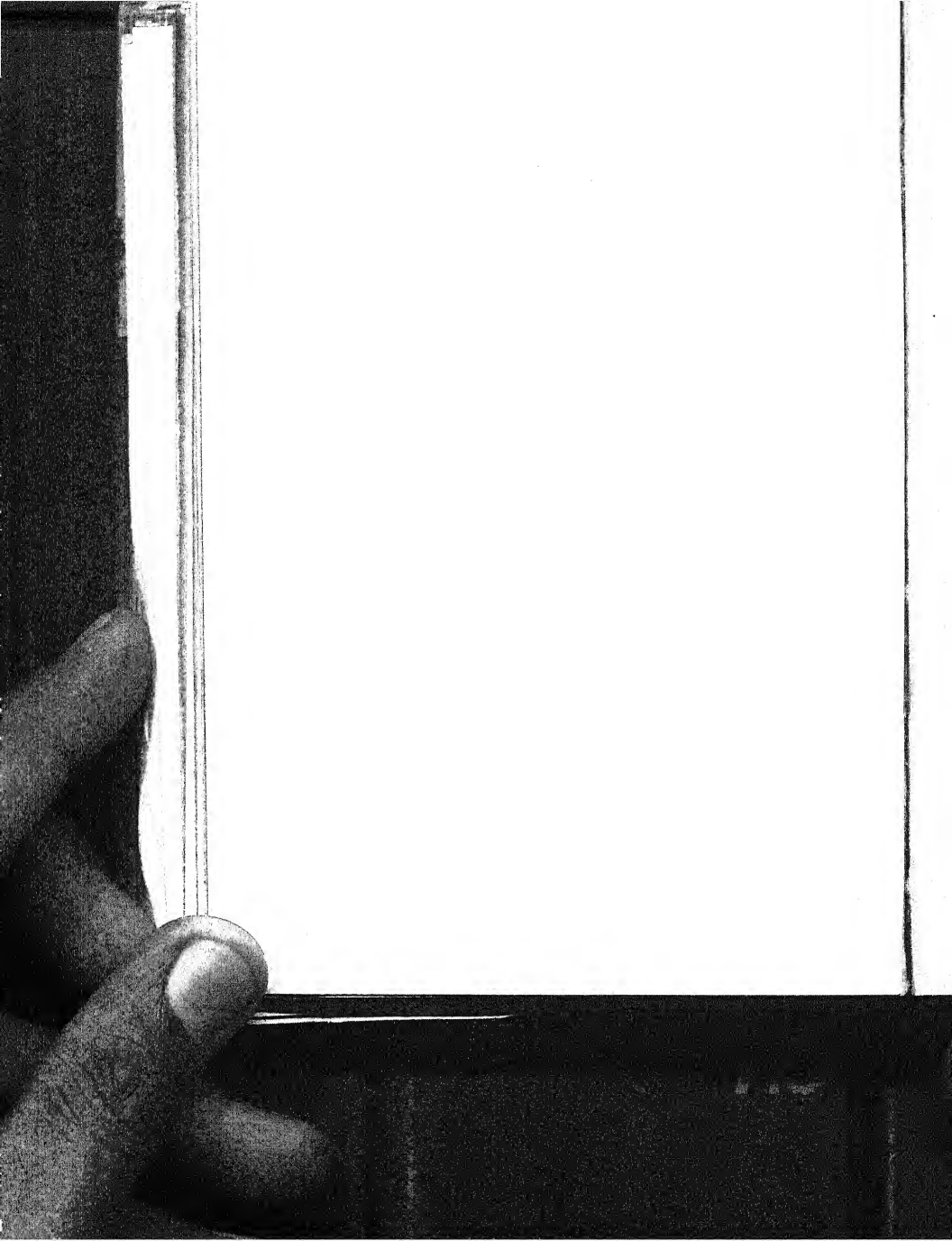


Photo by Will R. Ross.

THE VALLEY OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.

In this desolate and arid spot have been interred many of Egypt's greatest dead. The hill-sides are honeycombed with tombs, many of great beauty. The entrance to one can be distinctly seen in the foreground to the left of the roadway.

Chester.



The Five Cities

The mosque has recently been restored, but remains empty and desolate, unvisited except by the feet of Christian tourists. It is one of the most interesting monuments in Cairo, though it is not really in Cairo proper, but is almost the only building remaining of the fourth city, the first to be called Masr. Masr has always been the Arabic name for Egypt, and is applied by the modern Egyptian alike to Babylon, Fostat, Masr, and Masr el Kahira. It is this part of Cairo surrounding the mosque of Ebn Touloun which is really Masr Atika, or Old Masr, though that name has been in our time given to Fostat and Babylon, and will probably never be altered—another instance of the almost invariable rule in Egypt that nothing is ever what it is called. To try and find out the true original name of any place or thing in Egypt is like trying to find out the name of the White Knight's song. This city of Ebn Touloun's has also been called at different times El Katai and El Askar.

In the latest restoration of the mosque, the original Kufic tablet commemorating its erection was discovered among the rubbish, and is now fixed against one of the walls. The whole place is worth the prolonged study of architects and historians. The chief peculiarity about the mosque is the shape of its arches, which are believed to be the earliest pointed ones known. It is not so generally recognized that they also give the earliest example of the inward curve above the capital which later developed into the "horseshoe" arch.

Things Seen in Egypt

There now existed four separate yet contiguous cities: Memphis, still existing, though almost deserted and falling into ruin, on the west bank; Babylon, which was formerly connected with it by a bridge of boats, on the east bank, and now almost entirely inhabited by the Christian Egyptians; Fostat, the city of the Arabs; and Masr, the city of the earlier Turkish dominion. The fifth city—the nucleus of the present native town—was founded to commemorate the conquest of Egypt by a Greek general leading the army of the Fatimite Arabs.

These were the instructions given by the Kaliph Moez to his general, one of the Greek children who had been brought up in the faith of Islam.

“You shall enter Fostat in your ordinary clothes; you shall have no need to give battle to the inhabitants thereof. You shall inhabit the forsaken palace of the Children of Touloun, but you shall found another city, surnamed El Kahira, to which the whole world shall own submission.”

Except for the last clause, this forecast was speedily and literally fulfilled. The Greek occupied the country almost without striking a blow, and the new city was founded with the greatest solemnity. The materials were laid ready, the workmen ranged in their places, and then all waited in silence the signal of the astronomers, who watched the star of victory. At the precise moment the order was given, and with loud cries the men fell simultaneously to work.

The walls of this city were made to include much

The Five Cities

of the city of Ebn Touloun, and in many places they may still be seen, though most of the gates now remaining are of later date. A new mosque, of course, was to be built, superior in magnificence and sanctity to the great mosques of the older cities. It was not only a mosque, but shortly after its completion became also a University, and still remains the most important University of the Moslem world. The sight of the students who throng its spacious courts is one of the most interesting and picturesque in Cairo. Ladies, however, should not visit it alone, as it is a stronghold of fanaticism which a very little provocation might render dangerous. The Kaliph Moez had not the religious scruples of the Sultan Ebn Touloun, and of the forest of clustering pillars in this far-famed mosque there is scarcely one that has not been taken from some Christian church. They are not, however, good specimens, and there are hardly any beautiful capitals among them. This mosque is not called after the name of its builder, which is the usual custom, but is known as the Gama-el-Azhar. Here may be seen, in their different wards, representatives of all the different countries of the East and Africa—Turks, West Africans, Syrians, Baghadi, Indians, Kurds, Darfour, Sennaari, Nubians, Somali, Arabians, and Egyptians.

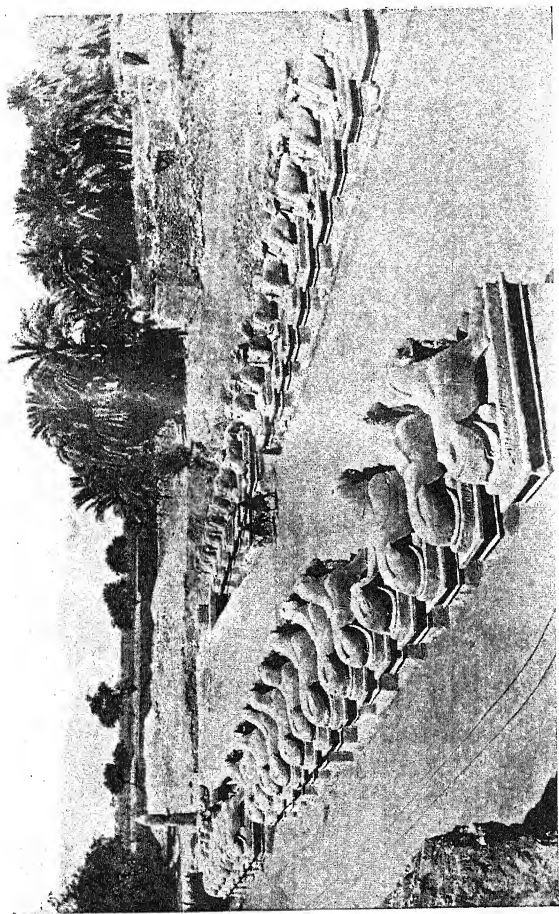
In this medieval Cairo are all the most beautiful mosques, descriptions of which are to be found in every guide-book. The last one built before the

Things Seen in Egypt

Turkish conquest killed what was left in Egypt of the artistic spirit is the well-known El Ghuri, which has been restored since the British occupation.

El Ghuri was a mameluke, or European slave, belonging to Kait Bey, who, much to his own astonishment, was elected Sultan after the rapid murder or deposition of four others in succession since Kait Bey died in 1496. Kansu el Ghuri at once refused the perilous honour, declaring that he was more accustomed to obey than to command. The whole assembly being unanimous, however, in declaring that they would except no other ruler, El Ghuri consented, after exacting from them a solemn oath that if they were dissatisfied with his government there should be no rebellion or murder, but that he should be permitted to retire into private life unharmed.

He took the throne in 1501, and after a vigorous reign of fifteen years, died on the field of that battle which gave Egypt to the Turks. His troops had never seen artillery before, and were struck with such terror that large numbers of them deserted to the enemy at once. El Ghuri, attempting to rally his men, fell from his charger, and was crushed under the horse-hoofs of his flying mamelukes. His nephew, Tuman II., was hastily elected, and gave battle once more, but could not get his men to stand against these new and terrible weapons. Cairo was stormed, and Tuman was hanged like a common criminal by the Turkish Sultan Selim at the gate of execution. This is the



THE AVENUE OF SPHINXES AT KARNAK.

This magnificent avenue is of sphinxes of enormous size. Notice the two figures on donkeys in the centre of the picture.

The Five Cities

great gate still remaining beyond the Gama el Muaiyad, called the Bab Zawilah.

The capital of Egypt is still shifting north and west, and practically a new and sixth town has been built in the last fifty years, which is to all intents and purposes European. But no fresh name has marked either the later Turkish conquest in 1517, or the new Albanian dynasty founded by Mohammed Ali in 1841. Masr el Kahira has been shortened by the Europeans into Cairo, and that name now covers the remains of all the towns except Memphis, which, being on the other side of the river, became an absolute ruin about the end of the twelfth century.

In the long-dead pagan city survive two things to be seen, a graven image and the fragments of a temple. In the Christian city remain thirteen churches and the Roman fortress. In the first Moslem city of the Eastern Arabs we may see the Mosque of Amr. In the second Moslem city of the Turks still stands the mosque of Ebn Touloun. In the third Moslem city of the Western Arabs we find the thriving University. But in the sixth great European city neither temple, church, mosque nor University has been raised to hallow the whole. Instead, we have built a shrine for the dead past, a museum which is also a tomb.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE NILE

IN the old days it was a beautiful and restful thing to go up the Nile. We chose our dahabieh or house-boat, decked it with flowers in pots and gaily-coloured awnings, laid in a stock of books, chose our few companions well, and sailed away into a lotus-land of sunshine and silent waters for five or six months. Every evening we tied up against the bank and walked on shore, or sat to watch the sunset colour all the west with crimson fire. We bought our supplies as we went of fresh meat, poultry, eggs and vegetables, and once or twice in the voyage we waited contentedly near some village while the crew made and baked a fresh supply of bread. Sometimes a halt was called to examine one of those forgotten cemeteries which honeycomb the desert for miles and miles in so many places, the resting-place of all the countless unnamed dead who could not afford the costly chapels and stone sarcophagi of nobles, priests and kings. Even so far away from "civilization" almost all those at all near the Nile have been ransacked and despoiled by the native

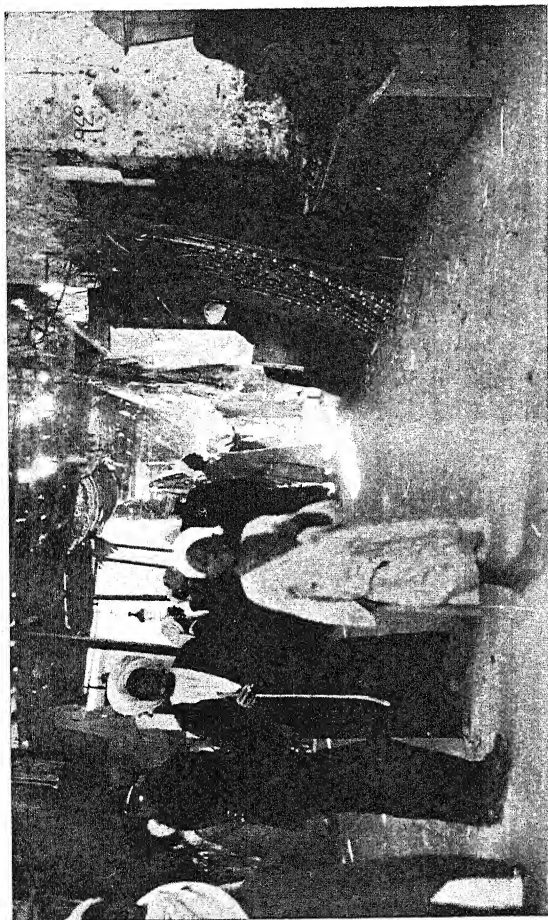
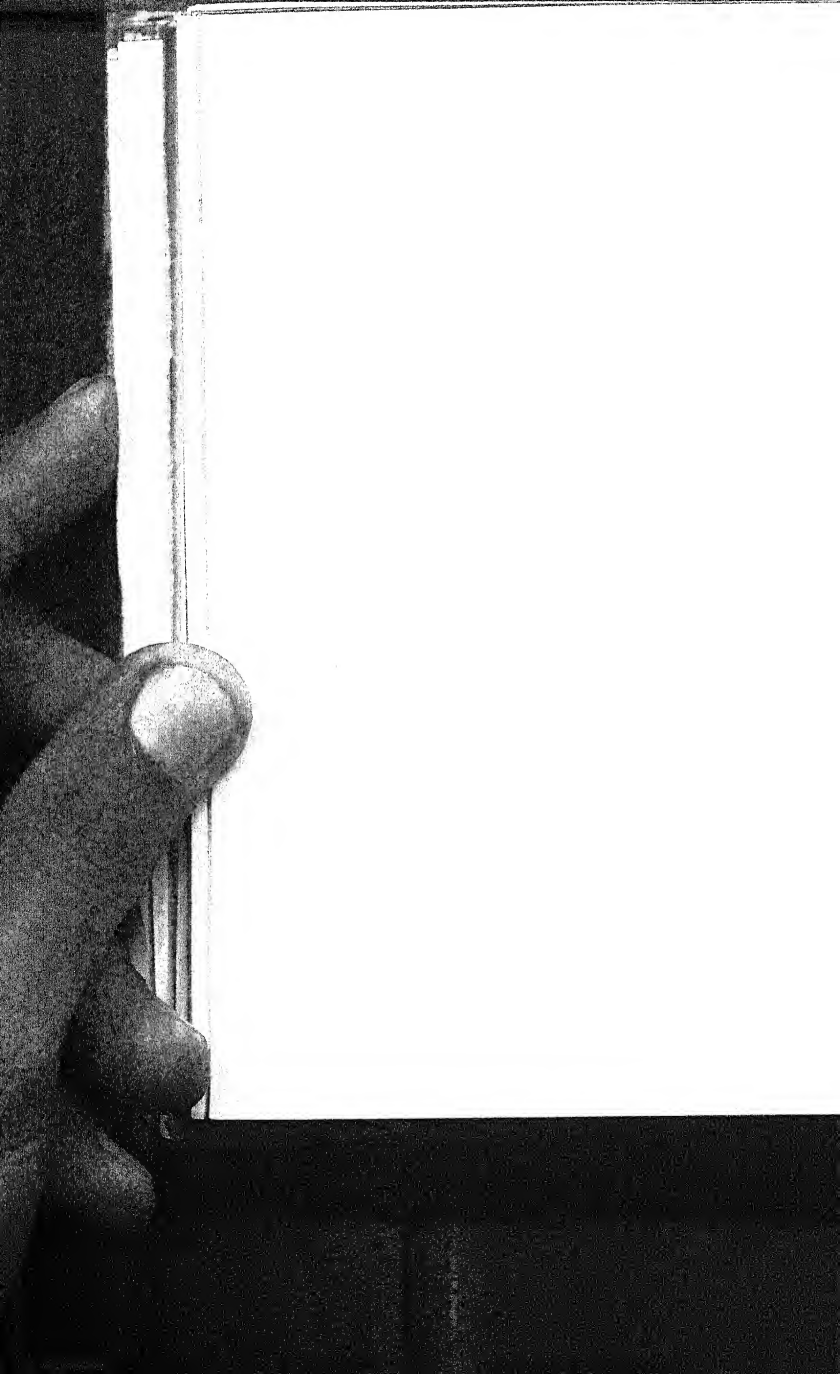


Photo by Will E. Root.

THE BAZAAR AT ASSOUAN.

The most picturesque in all Egypt. The sunlight streaming through the broken places in the roof has a most charming effect.

Chester.



On the Nile

antiquity dealers. The openings yawn dangerously at your feet except where years of sand have partly hidden the work of sacrilegious hands. A few shreds of grave-clothing, the broken boards of the coffin, are all that remain to bear witness to the piety of the ancient Egyptian and the greed of his latter-day descendants; though, indeed, tomb-robbing seems to have been a fairly common offence even in the old days. Where the pottery has been broken and left, instead of being carried away, it is possible for the initiated to guess the date within a century or two. Those that I saw in my last journey on the Nile were almost all Twelfth Dynasty—that is to say, between 5,000 and 6,000 years old.

Or we paused for a day at a ruined, but still inhabited town, and in the course of a morning's walk could find inscribed stones belonging to its walls or temples with 3,000 years between the earliest and the latest date, while stone Christian coffins which held the dead of Clement's time now serve as troughs for water.

Sometimes in the desert not far from the Nile we came across a bird sanctuary, generally a little depression in the sand, hardly to be seen a little way off. It is full of low mimosa-bushes, covered with what looks like a dense cloud, but is really a mass of gossamer, out of which only the topmost sprays of green leaf and pale yellow blossom lift themselves. Here are found doves, the beautiful small bee-eater, and several other birds, all quite

Things Seen in Egypt

happy and tame, with their nests probably safe in the impenetrable thicket below.

The birds of Egypt and her southern provinces are, some of them, very pretty, but there are not very many good songsters among them. Snipe are plentiful in the marshes, and great flocks of quail and wild-duck pass through the country twice a year. The duck are of two or three different sorts, and many of them, finding that they are allowed sanctuary in the Gizeh Gardens, have decided to make it their permanent home. The brilliant blue kingfisher may be found along the canals, but he is a shy bird, unlike the larger black and white kingfisher with its beautiful butterfly flight above the water. Of the birds seen in Egypt, but not found in England, the handsomest is perhaps the sun-bird, or larger bee-eater. They come in a radiant flock, like jewels flashing in the sunshine, and with a musical whispering and calling to each other. It is one of those birds that are almost impossible to describe—bronze, green, purple, black, steel-blue, brown, bright yellow—I think there is even an edge of white and a patch of red, all mingled in one glorious iridescence. The female, I think, has *only* six colours. Then there is the hoopoe, with its crown of feathers, concerning which a pretty legend relates that they used not to wear this crest, but acquired it in the following manner: A certain King was lost with his following in the desert, and they were all dying of thirst, when a flock of



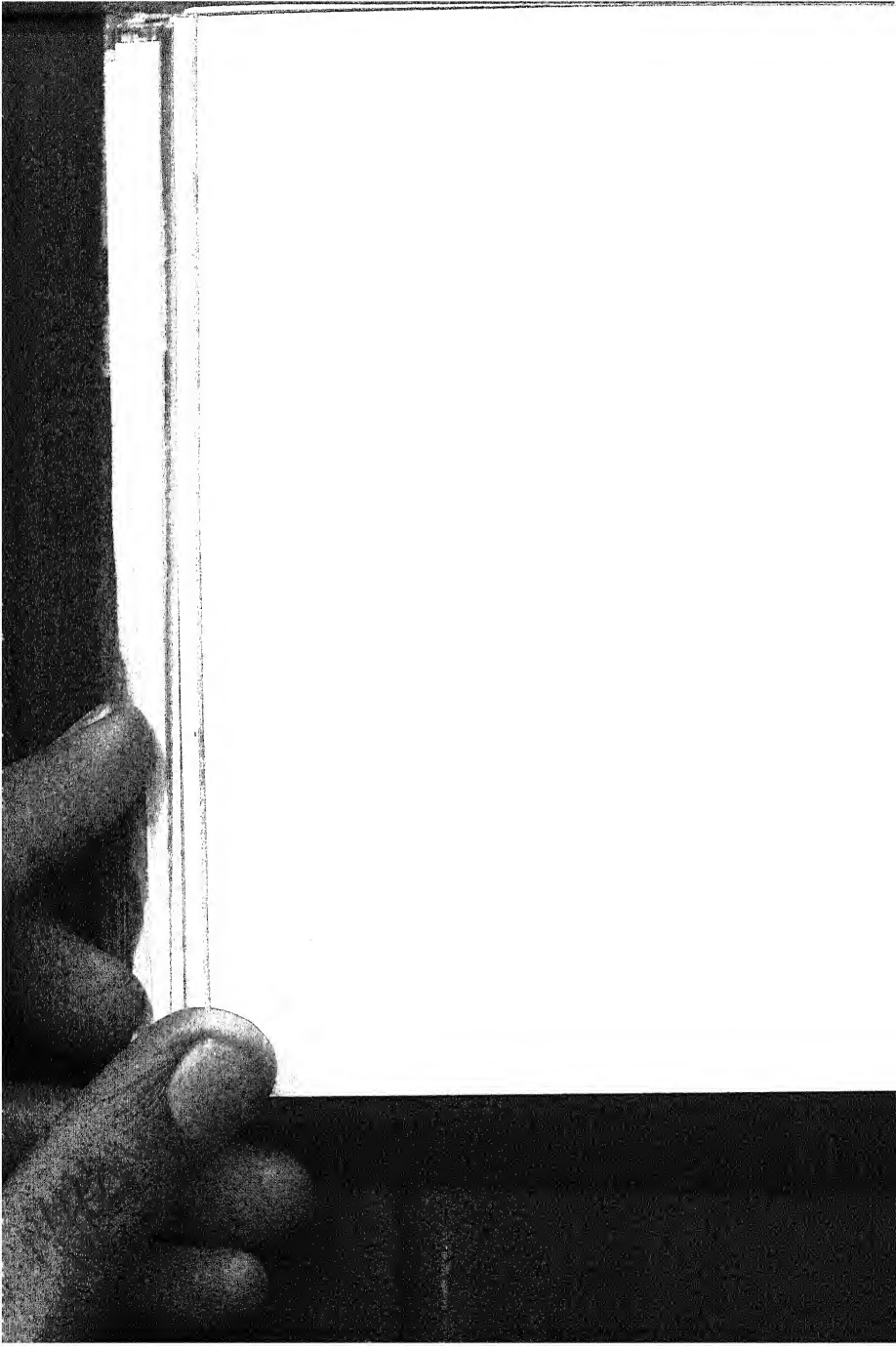
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ASSOUAN AND ELEPHANTINE ISLAND.

The first Nile cataract is to the right. The tower of Assouan has long marked the southern limit of Egypt proper.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOKS



On the Nile

hoopoes flew up to them. The King desired that the caravan should follow the birds, who fluttered before them, and led the fainting men straight to water. Then the King, who is called Solomon, King of the Jews, in some versions of the legend, desired to bestow upon the hoopoes crowns of gold. But the hoopoes shrank from the offer, and their spokesman said, "O King, give us not crowns of gold, for then all men will seek to destroy us and possess them; but give us rather crowns of feathers: then shall we remain in safety, yet all men shall know that we succoured the King in his extremity." So the King commended the hoopoes for their wisdom, and gave them the crowns of feathers, which they have borne ever since.

The Egyptian dove is the prettiest of all its kind, with a curious cry, almost like a human laugh. It used to sound almost uncanny coming from the roof of Cairo Church, where the doves sat peeping through the skylights at the kneeling congregation below, and appeared to find the sight irresistibly funny. You see them everywhere, in the gardens of the towns, and in the country along the river. There is the blacksmith bird, with its single note repeated at intervals like the beat of the hammer on the anvil, and a little warbler whose low sweet song may be heard from every tree in the spring. But the only really beautiful songster in Egypt is the one we know so well in our English fields, the skylark. The best place

Things Seen in Egypt

to hear him is on the banks of the Nile, but not if you go by steamer, for then the noise of the paddle-wheels alone will drown those "profuse strains of unpremeditated art." But as you drop down the river in your dahabieh day by day, you are followed all the way by the hidden poet, showering his rain of melody. As you pass out of the sound of one, another takes his place, eternally joyous, eternally young. Sometimes you can see the tiny speck soaring high above the plain, but a moment more,

"And, drowned in yonder living blue,
The lark becomes a sightless song."

Then, as you drift northward, you come among the fields of sleep—

"Here, where the world is quiet ;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead ; winds and spent waves riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams,
I watch the green field growing,
For reaping-folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams."

Swinburne goes on to speak of "bloomless buds of poppies," but the great beauty of these opium poppies is not when in bud, but in full bloom. As they lift their heads upon the bank, and the strong sunlight strikes upon them, they are like coloured flames against the deep blue of the sky. The whole country for miles along the river is radiant with them—great chalices of sleep, rose-coloured



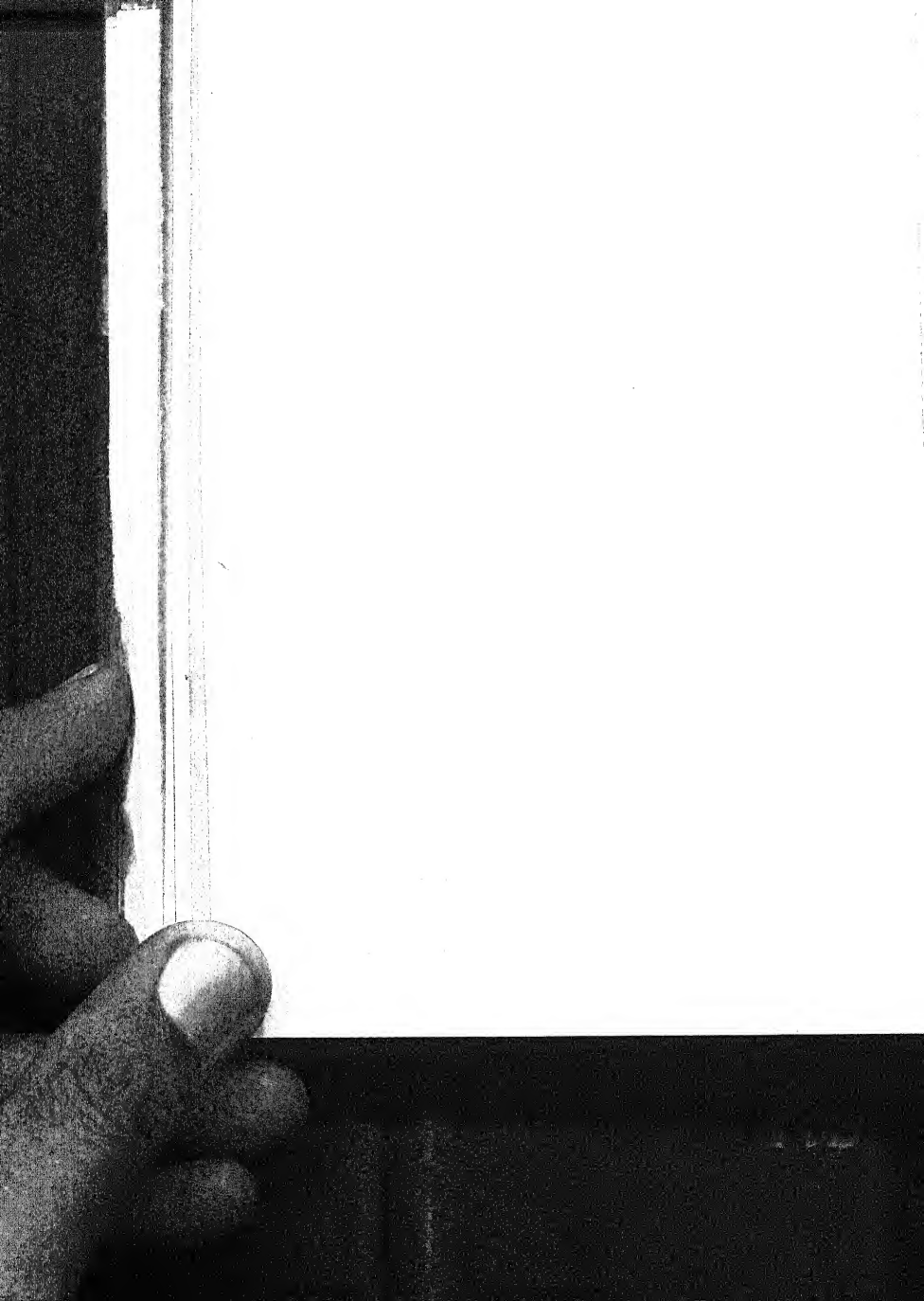
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THE ISLAND OF PHILÆ.

This photograph was taken from the Island of Bigeh. The square building to the extreme right is a temple to Isis, but called "Pharaoh's Bed" by the natives. It has no roof, and never was finished, but is one of the gems of the place.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



On the Nile

and lilac and pure white. The petals of the pink and lilac blossoms deepen in shade as they approach the calyx, and they are the most beautiful poppies I have ever seen. But even at this stage their beauty is baneful; it is not wise to gather them, and their drowsy influence steals through the air even across the river. Well may the Egyptian call the flower "the father of sleep."

Then the light grows deeper and brighter, and the men shake off their lethargy, and press on to their anchorage for the night. The water grows purple as the red flame dies out in the west, the stars reveal themselves with a brilliancy hardly to be imagined in our mist-enshrouded isle, and another day of the restful river life has come to an end.

In going south there is generally more of effort, for you have not the stream with you, and very often the wind against you too. But then, you are looking at the longest record of history in the world as page after page is unrolled before you. Every temple as it comes is a fresh and absorbing interest to be studied at leisure. In the old days, when you finally arrived at the first cataract, your men sacrificed a sheep at your expense, and dressed your boat as if for a national festival.

Then came the steamers, and the Nile became a mere highway to be traversed as soon as possible. So many expeditions allowed on the way up, so many on the way down; when a herd of people were marshalled round in charge of a conductor,

Things Seen in Egypt

fought for by donkey-boys, deafened by cries for backsheesh, and came back to the same babel of sound on the steamer too exhausted to remember much of what they had seen. It was inevitable, of course; one tried to console oneself with the reflection that thousands of people were able to make the journey to whom otherwise the cost would have been prohibitive. But it was difficult to be grateful even for that sometimes, when observing the kind of people who took advantage of the new possibilities. Those who ruined the character of the people by throwing money at every stopping-place to be scrambled for, and allowed themselves to be familiarly handled and shouted at by every donkey-boy, were at least well-intentioned and generally interested. But on one occasion when I went with some friends to revisit old haunts by steamer there were tourists—not English people—on board who deliberately played cards with their backs to the scenery all the way up, and grumbled when the boat stopped and they were herded off to rush round a ruin. That, of course, was their own affair; but when, on the return journey, we found they were getting up a petition to the captain not to stop at any more of these places, as they wanted to get back to Cairo, we English thought it was time to interfere.

At Assiout we pass the second great barrage on the Nile. The first is easily made a day's excursion from Cairo to the junction of the two great branches which are all that remain now of the

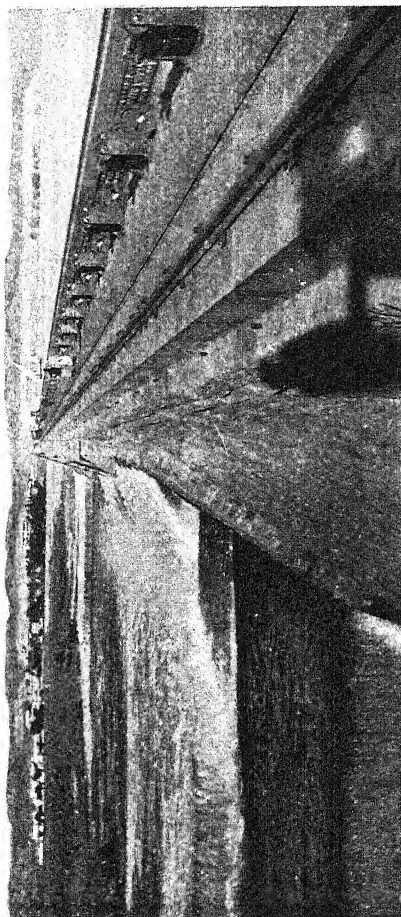


Photo by Will R. Ross.

THE ASSOUAN DAM.

This picture shows the two water-levels.

Chester.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK

On the Nile

ancient seven streams of the Nile. This first barrage was built by command of Mohammed Ali, who laid the foundation-stone with great ceremony in 1847. It was designed, like all the others, to hold up the water at the time of flood, and incidentally provided a very valuable bridge. But this first barrage was no use except as a bridge for the first forty or fifty years of its existence. Its construction was entrusted to a French engineer named Mongel, and the foundations were not strong enough to resist the Nile in flood, so that it could not be used. It was left for Sir Colin Moncrieff to decide that it could and should be made workable, and with the assistance of Mr. (now Sir William) Willcocks, it was done. After some very exciting and critical weeks there came a day when the first barrage could be said to work, though for some time the working was very risky. When it had been demonstrated that the thing could be done, a sum of money was at length granted to put it into a really efficient state, and two more Englishmen, Colonel Western and Mr. Reid, were brought from India to take charge of the work.

Then Sir Colin Moncrieff sought for the Frenchman, Mongel Bey, who had designed the work so many years before. He found him an old man, living in poverty and oblivion. Sir Colin left the Egyptian Government no rest till it had granted him a pension, and he used to report to Mongel Bey the progress of the work as if to his chief. On one occasion when a critical time had been safely

Things Seen in Egypt

won through, Sir Colin went to tell Mongel Bey, but found that he had just heard of the death of his son. He would have retreated, but was urged to go in, as the old man sat speechless with grief, and they wanted to rouse him from his stupor. Sir Colin went into the room, and found several Frenchmen who had come to condole with the bereaved father. He took his place among them, and there was silence for a while; then, being again entreated, Sir Colin whispered to the stricken old man, "The barrage is holding up three metres of water."

Mongel Bey rose to his feet and flung his arms abroad with a gesture of exaltation. "Vous entendez, mes amis," he cried aloud. "Trois metres! Trois metres!"

It is a pretty and peaceful spot, this parting of the rivers, one going to Damietta and one to Rosetta. The whole space between the rivers has been laid out as a public garden, where scientific experiments in horticulture are carried on by an Englishman from Kew. At almost all times of the year it is lovely, but the most brilliant show used to be in the time of the chrysanthemums, which do so well out of doors in Egypt. The time of orange-blossom is sweet, and also this barrage is one of the few places in Egypt where you may see a wide expanse of beautiful green turf. A wild grass, something like the pampas, turns the low-lying levels by the river into a sheet of silver at its flowering-time.

The barrage at Assiout has not the same beauty,

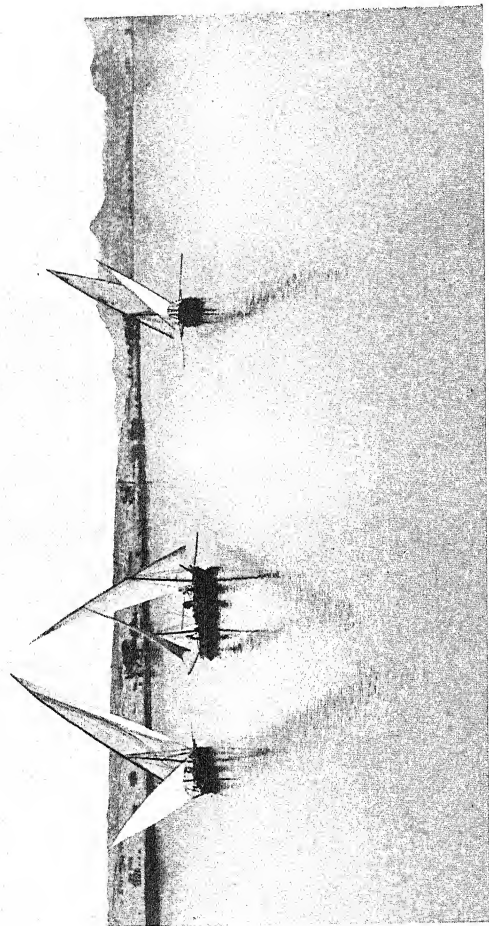
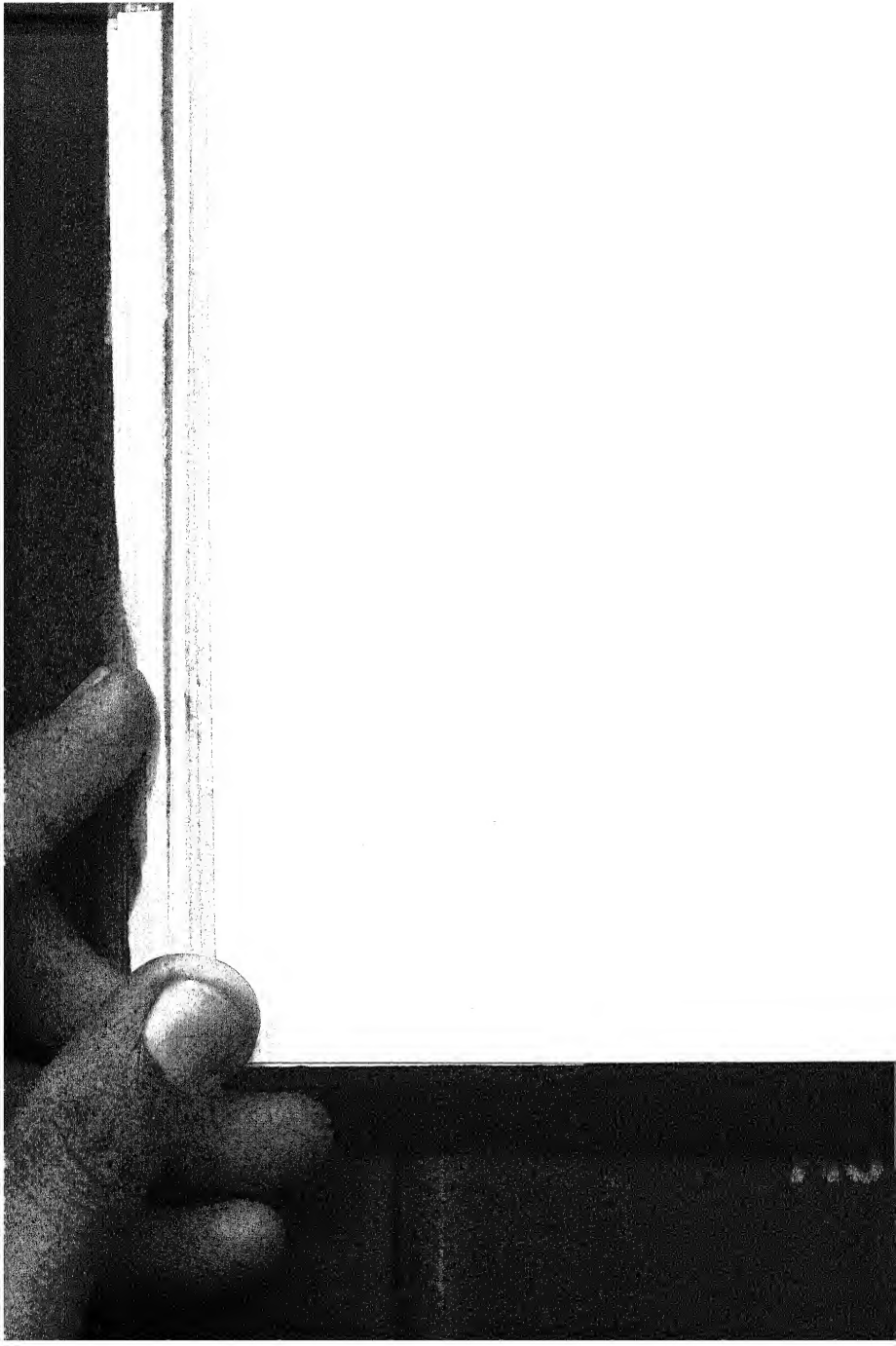


Photo by Will R. Rose.

THE RIVER AT KOROSKO.

A typical Nile scene, with the picturesque boats, palm-dotted banks, and the distant hills forming an interesting background.

Cluster.



On the Nile

and is a terrible hindrance to navigation. Indeed, the people who still desire to use their ancient water-way do not seem to have received due consideration in the reforms carried out under British supervision. Till a few years ago the native boats were still made to pay toll for passing under the bridges, which, however necessary, obstructed their navigation; and no proper arrangements have yet been made for keeping a clear water-way in a channel which we have done so much to denude of water. Still, the barrages are of the greatest use in providing water for land hitherto not reached at the time of high Nile. Assiout is perhaps the busiest trading town in Egypt. Various roads stretch across the western desert to the oases, and besides the well-known Assiout pottery, many other things are made here. The Coptic girls of Assiout embroider the net-scarves with the flat gold and silver work which are now so eagerly bought by the tourists. They were originally made in gold or silver on white net for wedding veils, and had the cross embroidered in the places where it was to rest on the heads of the bride and bridegroom. Then they were embroidered on black net to sell to the passing travellers, and now they are to be found in all the principal native shops of Cairo, and in almost every colour. A good one is heavy and costly, but, of course, the demand has produced a much cheaper article, from which the original significance has entirely departed.

In the desert to the south of Assiout, just beyond the Christian village of Deronka, there is

Things Seen in Egypt

an old and curious church cut out of the rock, some way up the hill. Since the days of peace and prosperity under the English the village belonging to it has run down into the plain, and the church is probably now deserted.

Many curious remains have been found at Akhmin, but chiefly of the early Christian period. There are several mummies, however, in the Museum at Cairo which came from Akhmin (the ancient Panopolis), and are interesting as showing the transition from the enormous wooden coffins of Pharaonic times to the portrait mummies of the first Christian centuries. The face is covered by a gilded mask, and the body is enveloped in a painted cartonnage with crossed bands. On the head is a thick crown of flowers.

Kenneh is also a busy town, but there is no great ruin of Ancient Egypt to be seen till we come to Balliana, from which the ruins of Abydos may be reached. They lie at some distance from the present bed of the river, and mark the site of the oldest known capital. Probably a scarcity of water was one reason why Mena, who heads the long list of known Egyptian Pharaohs, founded Memphis, and removed the seat of government to that city.

In this district, on the west bank of the Nile, lie the great "Red" and "White" monasteries founded by Anba Shenouda in the fifth century. He was one of the most famous saints of his day, and his counsel was sought by statesmen and

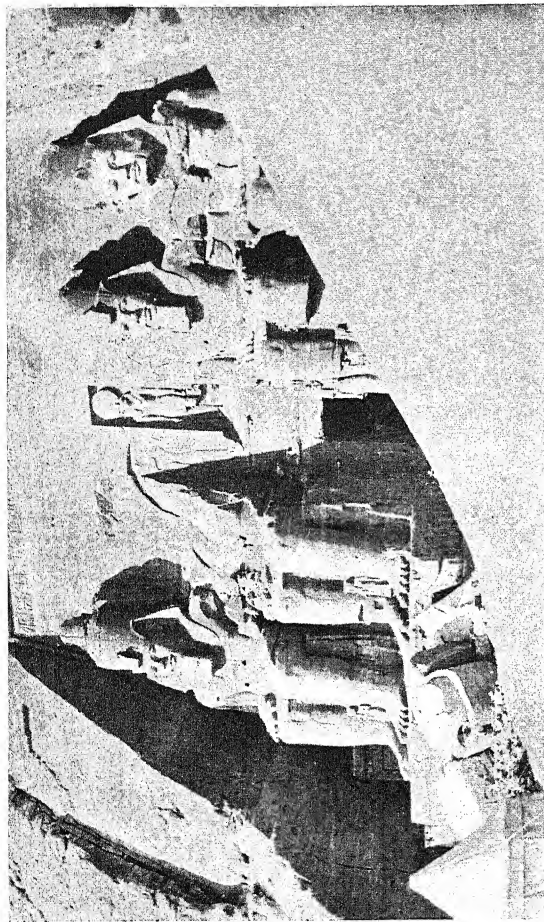
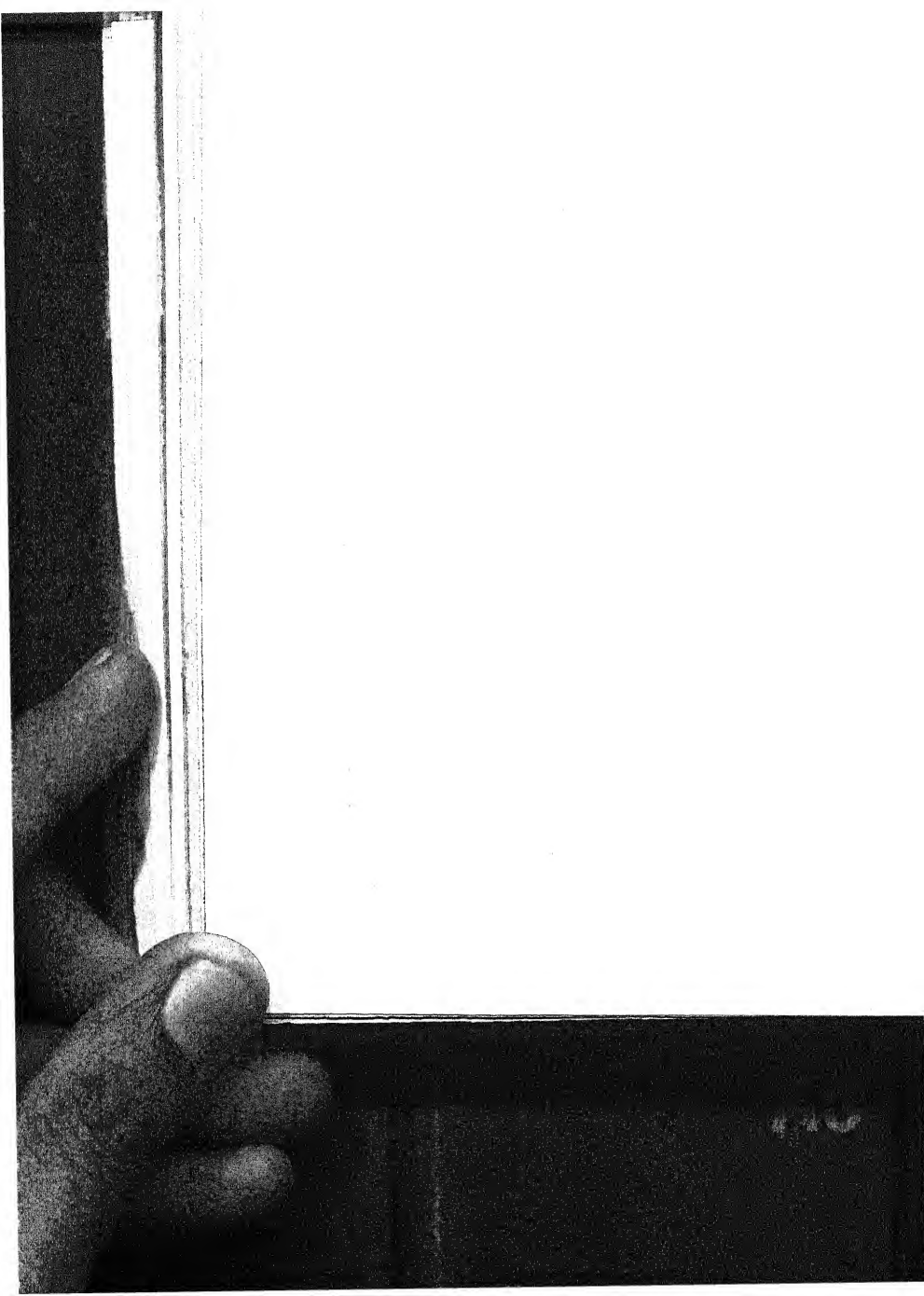


Photo by Will R. Rose.

THE GROTTO TEMPLE OF ABU SIMBEL.

Hewn out of solid rock with consummate skill. The front is 119 feet wide and 100 feet high; the four colossi are each 65 feet high. It was wrought by Ramses II., and reading from the left the complete figures are those of his daughter, his mother, and his wife. To realize the size, notice the lady beneath the left-hand figure.

Chester.



On the Nile

soldiers. He ruled the whole district in a somewhat autocratic fashion, as the stories about him show. Many of the wealthy landowners in this part were still pagan at that time, but woe to the man who ill-treated any of his Christian serfs within Shenouda's reach. On one occasion, when the serfs of some wealthy wine-growers were cheated out of their wages, and obliged to pay an enormous price for wine which had gone bad, and could not otherwise be disposed of, Shenouda promptly called out his regiment of monks, and destroyed entirely the houses and goods of the offenders!

At Denderah we meet with the first great temple still standing, though many others can be traced in ruined towns along the Nile. Denderah was rebuilt on the site of a far earlier temple by the later Ptolemies, and afterwards by the Roman Emperors. It was saved from destruction in later centuries, like so many other temples, by the fact that it had become absolutely covered from view by the mud huts of the poorer peasantry.

Thebes, now called Luxor, is perhaps the most interesting place in Egypt. Here is the great temple of Karnak, which took more than two thousand years to build, and near two thousand more to go to ruin, and still stands in ruin; the history of Egypt, graven in stone, from Usertesin, of the Twelfth Dynasty, till the once great empire became a Roman province. Here are the great roads connecting these wonderful temples, bordered

Things Seen in Egypt

with sphinxes, of which so many lie half ruined by the wayside still. Across the river went the stately processions from the temples of the east bank to the temples of the west. In the bowels of those barren hills they laid the mighty dead, so many of whose bodies are set out now in glass cases to be stared at by the wanderer from the lands of the West, which were hardly known to exist when the Pharaohs ruled on the Nile. Here, on the west bank, is the temple of Egypt's greatest Queen, with the long record of her splendid reign graven on its walls. It was from a shrine in this temple that the Hathor cow was taken which now stands in the Egyptian museum. Of the pathetic ruined splendours of hundred-gated Thebes many learned books have been written, but even if the visitor to Egypt had read all those, he would need several weeks to see all her remains with an understanding eye. By the tourist steamers he will be allowed four days.

Two more great temples—Esneh and Edfou—are passed between Luxor and Assouan, besides picturesque Kom Ombo, on the river bank. At Esneh another great barrage has just been finished which, it is said, will prove an enormous boon to the people of the Kenneh district. Esneh is said by the natives to be one of the healthiest places in Egypt. A good deal of pottery is made here, as well as at Kenneh. Then the great river narrows slightly, and we come to the first of its many cataracts.

CHAPTER IX

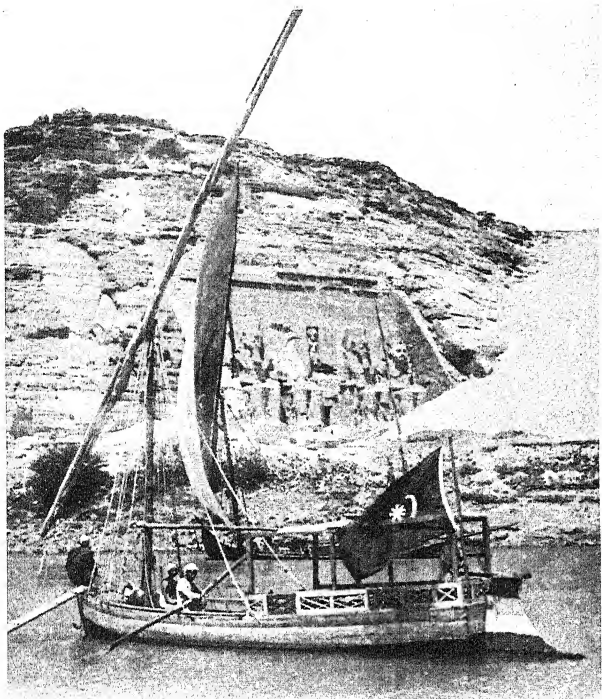
THE SOUTHERN PROVINCE

ASSOUAN is the favourite haunt of the Egyptian tourist, and enormous hotels have been built there in the last few years. A few miles to the south the great dam, or barrage, stretches its stony rampart across the river, and beyond poor Philæ floats, beautiful in her dying, on a waste of water when the Nile is high. It is a work worthy of the ancient Egyptians, but it may be questioned whether they would have planted it just there. On the island the pagan temples still lift their beautiful columns to the azure sky, but the Christian churches which succeeded them lie in indistinguishable ruin. The river here was very beautiful at this point, with its many islands, its swift rapids, and broad levels of smooth water. Here is the oldest Nile water-gauge, graven on the rocks by Pharaoh of old; here are inscriptions of many dates and many nationalities throughout the ages which have run their course since then. On one bank glass was made in very early times, and fragments may still be gathered from the desert. Assouan, or the

Things Seen in Egypt

first cataract, was the southern boundary of Egypt almost all through the centuries which lie between the conquest of Egypt by the Moslems in 640 and the expedition by which Mohammed Ali annexed the Soudan to Egypt in 1820. By that time the once-flourishing Christian kingdoms of the Soudan, who had opposed so determined a front to the Moslems that Amr gave up all idea of conquering the country, had disappeared. The slave-trade which the Arabs had succeeded in establishing had led to all the usual horrors of war and massacre; little by little the flourishing towns and stately churches had been destroyed, and for some two hundred years before the expedition of Mohammed Ali the Soudan had been in the hands of a group of Arab slave-traders, who called themselves sultans, and lived by the wholesale robbery and plunder of a dependant population, among whom the traces of past Christianity were few and far between. So complete was the ruin of this vast extent of country that only a little group of scholars knew anything of its lost Christian civilization, and when the Soudan was finally re-occupied by the English in 1899, hardly anyone knew that, so far from being a heavy burden on Egyptian finance which the military exigencies alone could justify, it might very soon be made self-supporting, and in time even profitable.

The southern frontier, however, is not now at Assouan, or the cataract just above it, but practically at Wady Halfa, though the nominal



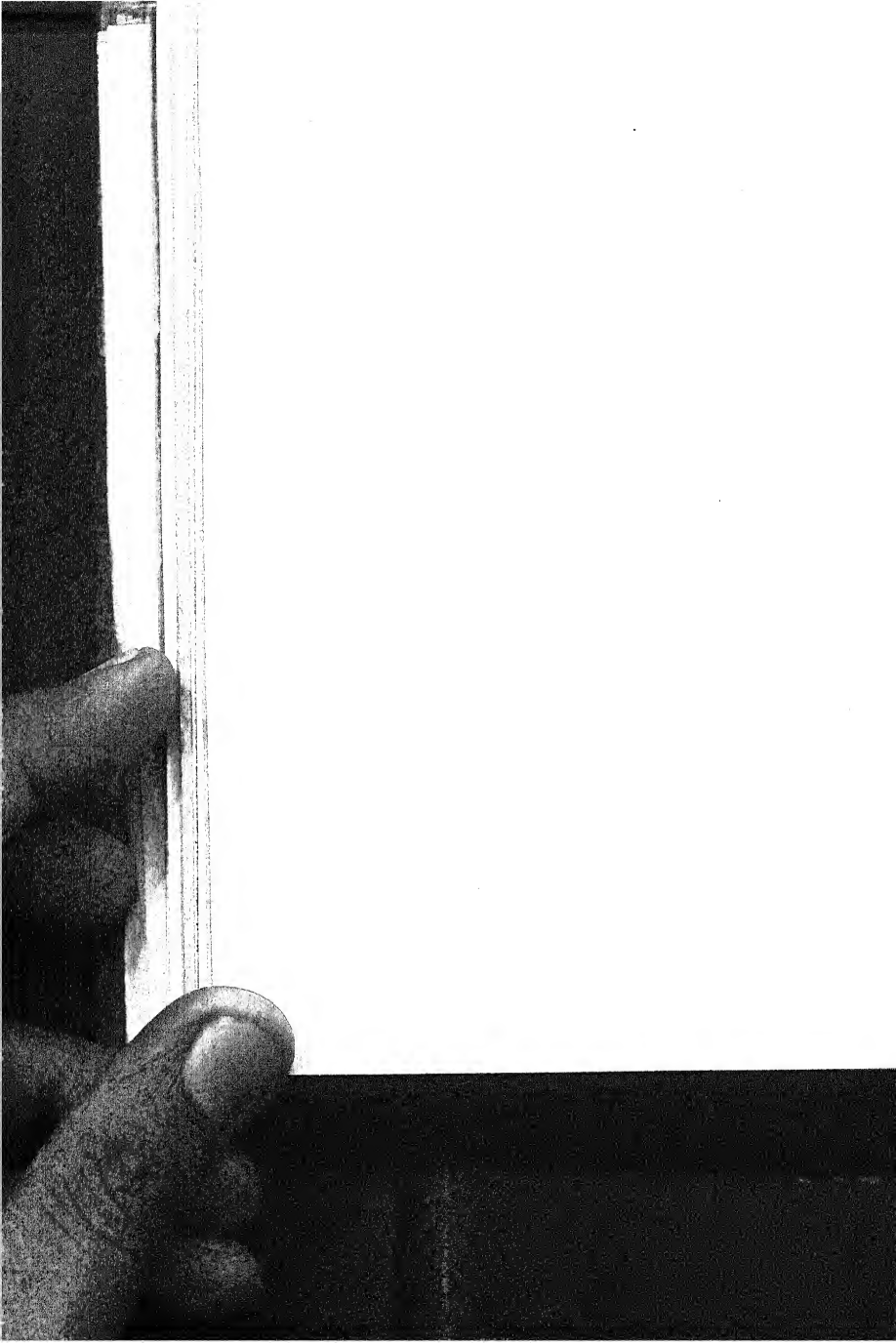
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NILE BOATS, AND TEMPLE OF ABU SIMBEL.

The enormous bank of sand to the right is of a beautiful orange colour.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



The Southern Province

boundary is the twenty-second parallel of latitude, so that we are still in Egyptian waters as we sail by Kalabsha, Dendur, and Abu Simbel. But we are here in Nubia, the home of the Berbers, which has Korosko for its most important town. Here may be seen the Bishareen Arabs, the great carriers of all this region. Here still linger certain ways of dressing the hair and adornment which remind us of the Egyptians who conquered this country in prehistoric times. Here, too, one suddenly realizes the meaning of two lines of a hymn which had always appeared to be nonsense before. Whether the author had ever been in Nubia or not, he had certainly managed to seize upon one of its special characteristics :

"Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand."

That exactly describes what seems to happen in Nubia. You pass by high banks of sand which seems absolutely golden in the sunshine, and as you watch you see that the sand is running down from the top to the bottom like swiftly-moving water.

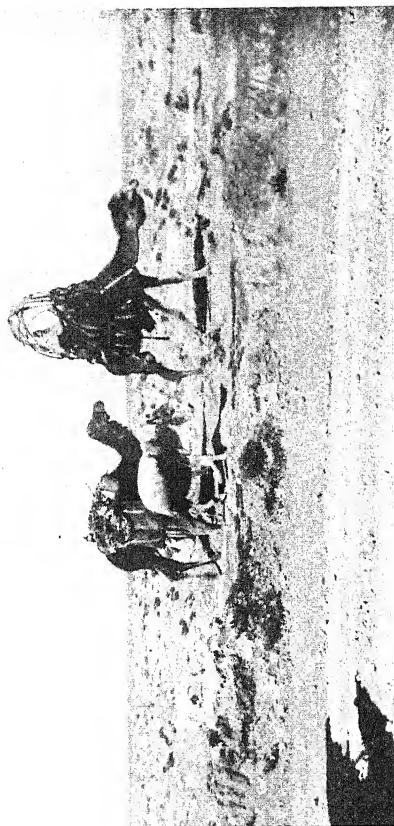
Somewhere not many miles from Korosko must lie the remains of the great walled city which until the twelfth century formed the northern outpost of the Christian kingdoms. It was called Primis by the Greeks and Latins; the Egyptian name has not come down to us. The city was sacked and destroyed by the Mohammedans about

Things Seen in Egypt

the year 1173, and an account of the Arab invasion was written by a contemporary who is generally known as Abu Salih, an Armenian who had settled in Egypt.

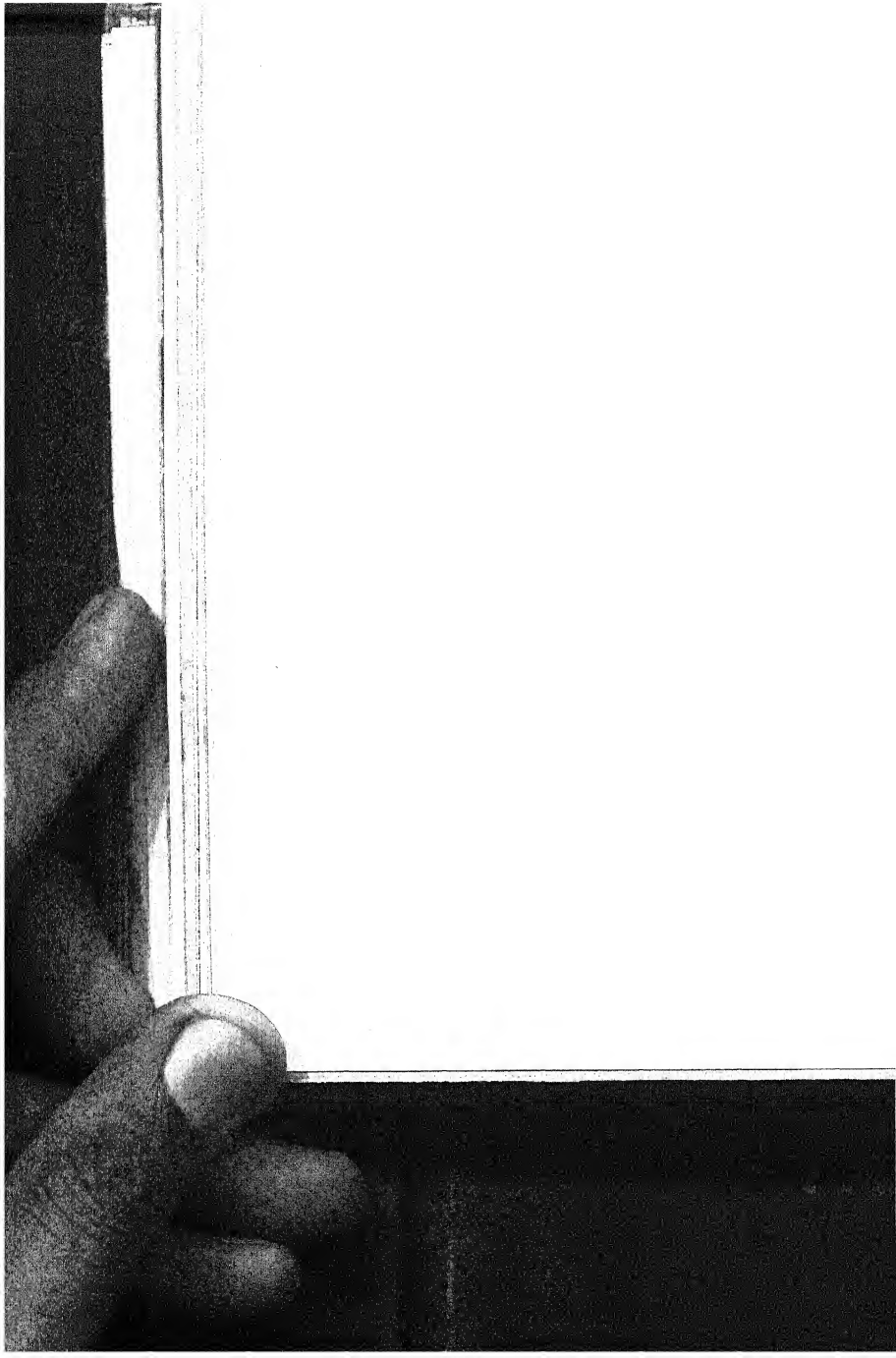
"In this town," he says, "there were many provisions and ammunition and arms . . . and when they had defeated the Nubians they left the town in ruins after conquering it, and they took the Nubians who were there prisoners. It is said that the number of Nubians was 700,000—men, women, and children; and seven hundred pigs were found here. Shamse-ed-Doulah (the Moslem general) commanded that the cross on the dome of the church should be burnt, and that the call to prayer should be chanted by the muezzin from its summit. His troops plundered all that there was in this district, and pillaged the church throughout; and they killed the pigs. And a bishop was found in the city, so he was tortured; but nothing could be found that he could give to Shamse-ed-Doulah, who made him prisoner with the rest, and he was cast with them into the fortress, which is on a high hill and is exceedingly strong. Shamse-ed-Doulah left in the town many horsemen, and placed with them the provisions and the weapons, and ammunition and tools. In the town a quantity of cotton was found, which he carried off to Kus and sold for a large sum."

There are several temples between Assouan and Wady Halfa, but most of them, though built in the Egyptian style, are of Ptolemaic or even of



A CARAVAN ON ITS WAY ACROSS THE DESERT.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOK



The Southern Province

Roman date. At Amada there are several remains of the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties; but the greatest of all—perhaps the greatest in all Egypt—is the wonderful rock temple built by Rameses the Great, and now known as Abu Simbel.

Here sit the solemn guardians of the Southern lands, those four giant figures of the Pharaoh for whom Moses is said to have conquered Nubia, as other generals conquered for him almost the whole known world. For more than 3,000 years they have kept their station, and still sit, with calm eyes that gaze eternally upon a dwindling world.

CHAPTER X

IN THE DESERT

THERE are two kinds of desert in Egypt—the desert sand which is only desert because it is left without water, and the desert which is a desert because nothing profitable will grow there. The latter is generally salt, like the desert which stretches away to the Wady Natron, that strange remote place which still holds a few scattered monasteries, and was once one of the largest monastic retreats in the world. It is a curious double valley running from north-west to south-east, and must once have been more fertile than it is now, or it could never have supported so large a community as it is known to have done. The two valleys are on rather different levels, and the depression which runs down them is called “the river without water.” In the far-off ages there was probably a river here which was not waterless ; there is a tradition that one ran here which branched off from the Nile as far south as Dongola. Within the last thirty years the western branch of the Nile broke its banks near

In the Desert

Beni Salameh, and the body of water thus released rushed through a gap in the intervening hills, and ran along the Waterless River. Beyond Deyr Baramous, the most northerly of the four remaining monasteries, there are still to be seen great trunks of an extinct forest. Now there is only an irregular chain of little lakes, generally of the most intense blue, like liquid sapphire, but much too salt for human use. Water only slightly brackish may be had by digging deep enough, and each of the monasteries has its own wells within the walls. These monasteries are at once retreats and cities of refuge where fugitives from a persecuting Government have found shelter from the days of St. Athanasius until now. But they have branch establishments in the Delta where more modern work is carried on. They do not engage in commerce, as the original settlers did in the third century after Christ. It was this first band of religious celibates under Ammon who discovered the value of the salt and natron deposits in the valley, and regularly worked them for export to the Rif, or Delta. By degrees a flourishing community grew up of several thousand men, all devoted to the service of God, but, unlike the hermits and monks of many parts of Egypt, all engaged in profitable occupations. A great deal of the fine glass for which Egypt was renowned was made here, and the ruins of their glass-works may still be traced. But after the Moslem conquest they fell an easy prey to the

Things Seen in Egypt

hordes of wandering Arabs who spread over the country: the works were deserted, the monasteries fell into ruin, and by degrees the valleys relapsed into the desolate desert surrounding those four last outposts of Christianity which the English found when they began again to work the salt and soda in the present day.

There is a certain beauty in the desolation. Long tracts of bulrushes grow green in spring around the silent lakes, and flocks of birds pause there for a day or two on their northward flight. One man saw "hundreds of flamingos rise in a scarlet cloud" from the dazzling blue water. The desert sand here is almost white, and much of it is crisp and easy to walk upon. Even when you climb up out of the salt lake valley it is not absolutely flat, but lies in long, low ridges like the slow heaving of a sullen sea. The white waste plain stretches away on every side, here and there a stunted bush, or a handful of dry and dying grass, but even this sign of life ceases shortly, and the great desert lies absolutely bare, strewn here and there with the whitening bones of camels, as with the wreckage of long-past storms. In front the low rolling hills shut out all glimpse of the fertile Delta to which you are returning, and though the English have made a little railway to the Wadi Natron since they began to try and work the natron deposits again, you can still forget it, and find the absolute desert a mile or two on either hand. It is the most

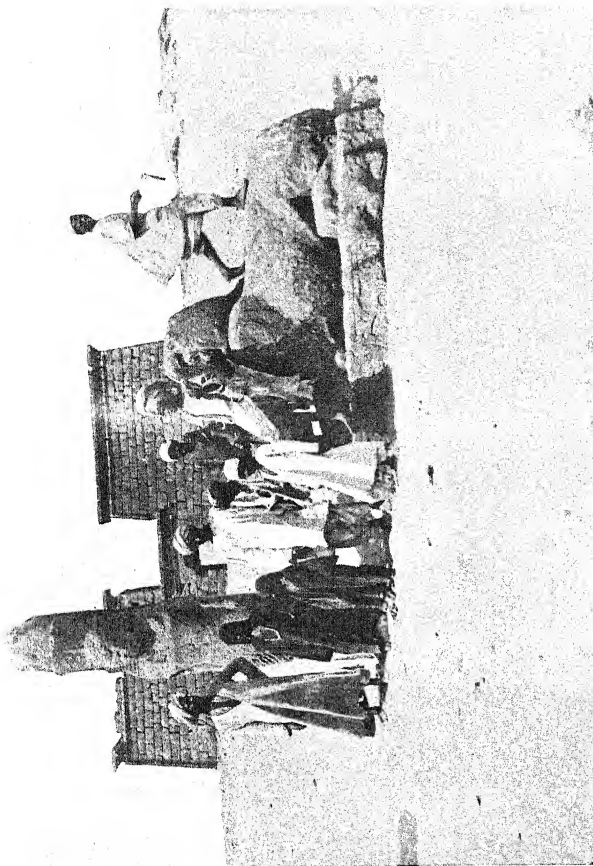
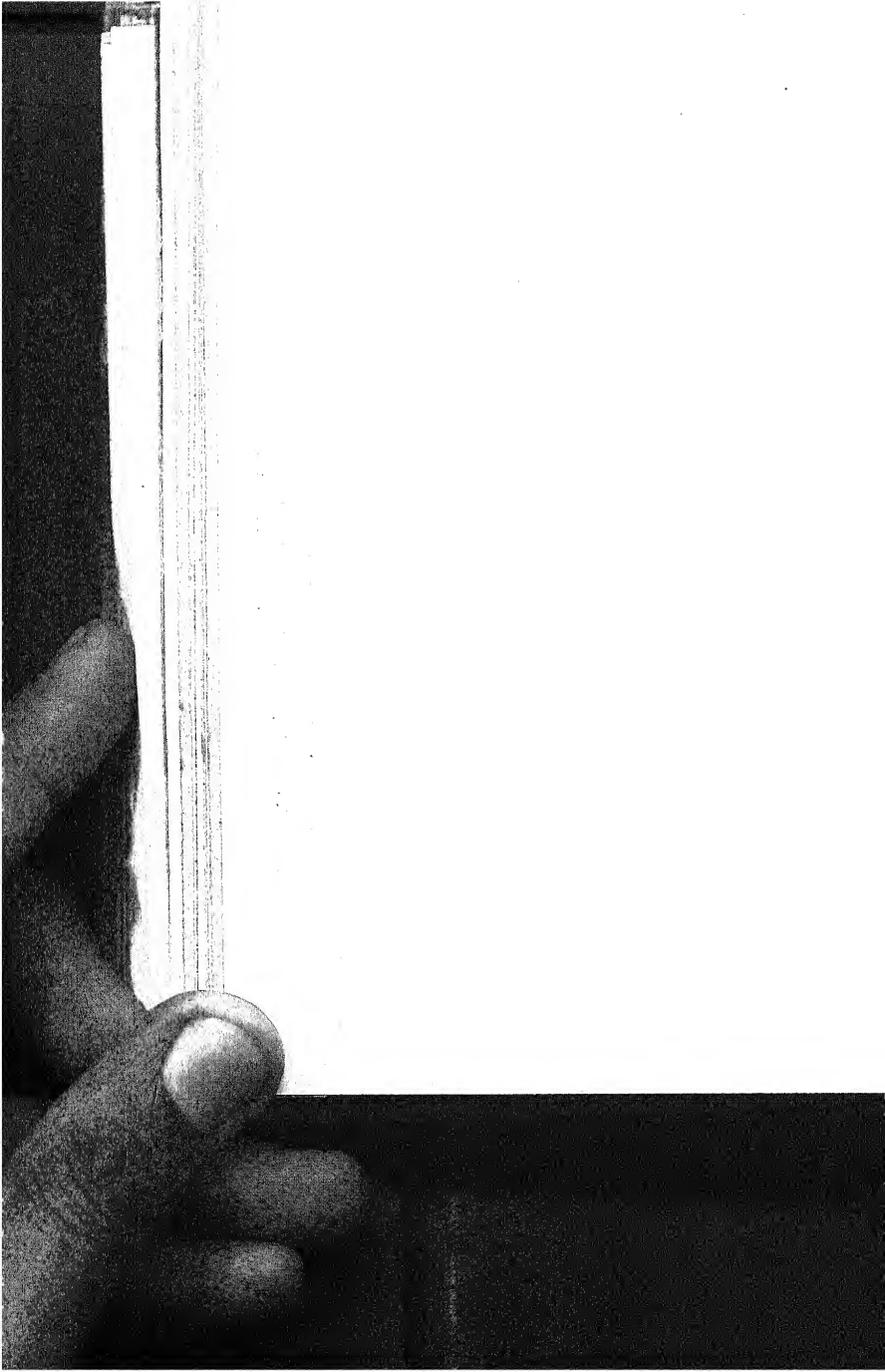


Photo by Will R. Ross.

Chester

A GROUP OF NATIVES AT THE ANCIENT TEMPLE AT WADY SABA.

Notice the chameleon hanging from the boy's extended stick. Most beautiful chameleons are found here, and are sold for a piastre.



In the Desert

beautiful of all the salt deserts, which exist in numerous parts of Egypt.

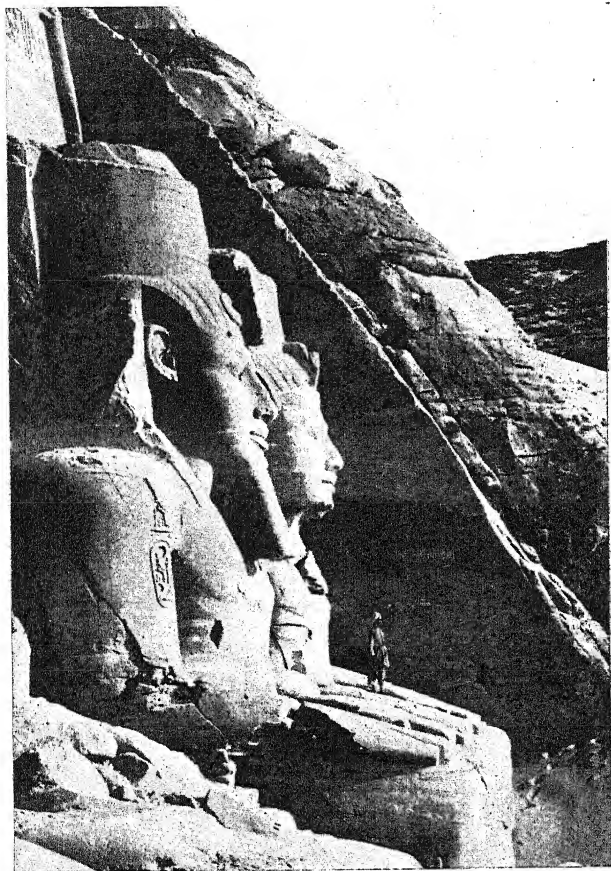
But most of the desert of Egypt is only desert because it is out of reach of water and cultivation. In the spring a host of tiny flowers take advantage of the scanty moisture to unfold their pale but generally scented petals. And much of this land has been won back to cultivation since we occupied the country. Every year fresh crops break into blossom on the sandy plain; young trees 20 to 30 feet high stand in dark rows, where fifteen years ago the shifting sands were a constant danger to the Tell el Barood Railway. Still, there is plenty of desert left for those who like the desert life—the long, slow march on camels which begins at dawn and lasts, with the exception of the noonday halt, till sunset; the wonderful sense of infinity which the immense horizon gives by day; the unutterable silence and beauty of the starlit night. The mirage is only seen in deserts where water is known to exist within twenty or thirty miles—at least, that has been my experience. I do not know if it is borne out by that of other travellers. It is often visible from the desert through which the ships of all nations pass in the Suez Canal, a shining blue lake and green shade gladdening the eyes of the voyager where only the dry, hot sand lies in reality. The vision is also largely affected by the sight of the individual. I have often been asked to look at the mirage of water in the desert beyond Zeitoun, where to me there

Things Seen in Egypt

was no illusion of water, only the low blue mist passing over the desert in the distance and shimmering in the sun.

Life in the desert is best enjoyed in summer, like so many other things in Egypt. Of late years it has become the fashion for winter visitors to camp in the desert beyond the Pyramids, but then bitter cold winds prevail, and not only search every corner of your tent, but may at any time bring it bodily down upon you. But in the summer it is good to be in the desert, especially at night, when a wonderful sight may be seen near the Pyramids. Sitting in a little hollow of the far-reaching desert, in the magical after-glow when the west burns like a sheet of flame, one is surrounded by silent, ghostly shapes, filling the air with soundless flutter of wings, showing black as they dance and whirl against the blood-red sky. One moment there was no sign of movement in all the silent landscape; the next all the air is full of this ghostly company, coming forth from the tombs when the sinking sun tells the hour of their release. One can well understand how such a scene may have suggested to the ancient Egyptian his conception of the bird-soul escaping from the tomb in search of a brighter existence. These are not birds, however, but large bats, of a species which I believe is peculiar to the tombs of Egypt.

Then the steel-blue nights of the full moon, when the clamour of the pariah dogs is hushed



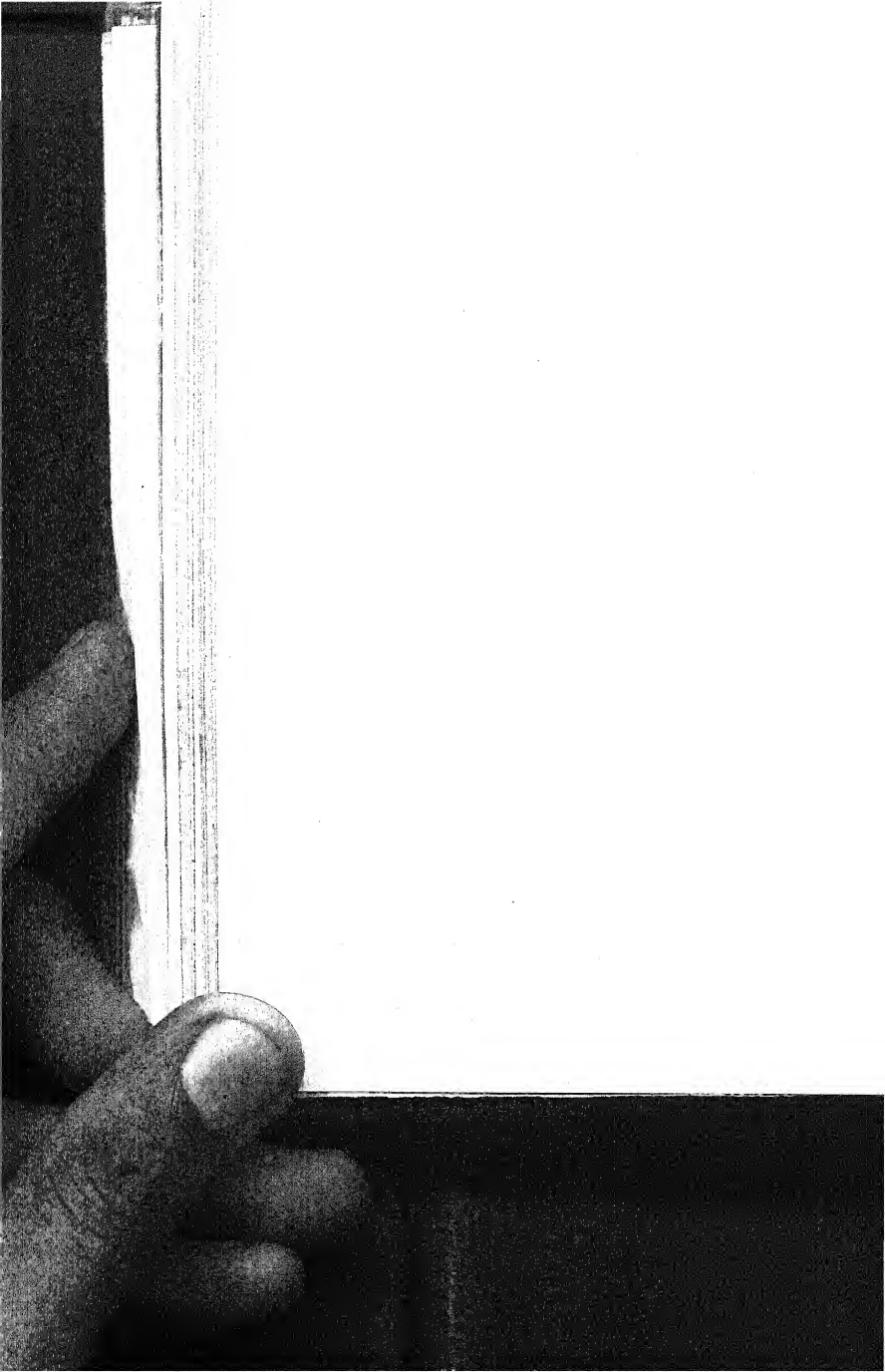
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THE SIXTY-FIVE FEET HIGH PORTRAIT-STATUE OF RAMSES II.

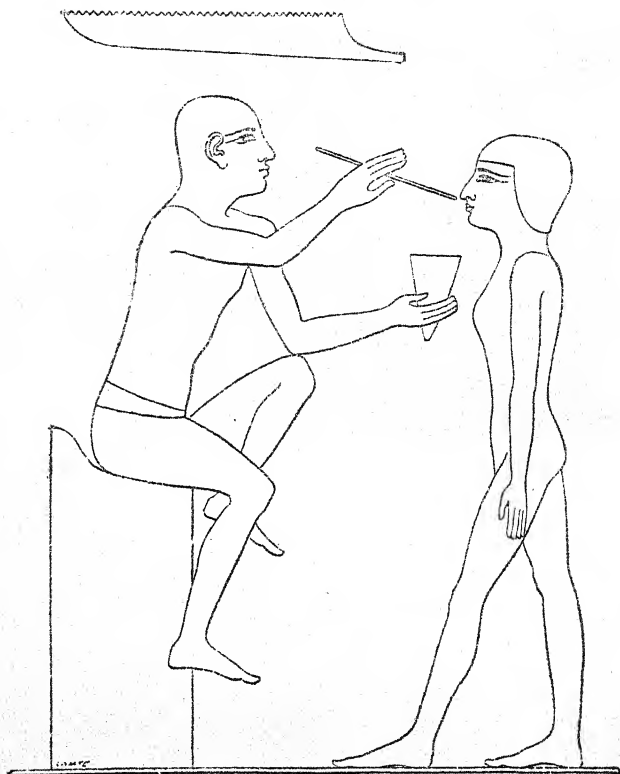
Notice how puny the native appears. This statue is in front of the rock-hewn temple of Abu Simbel.

THE PEOPLE'S BOOKS



In the Desert

at last in the villages below, and the intense silver light floods everything, revealing much that passes unnoticed in the glare of the noonday sun. From the white, uplifting cliffs of Sakhara you look down, as it were, upon a wide sea, but it is only the fertile plains melted into an indistinguishable blue haze. It is not necessary to trust to memory for the verses of poetry which haunt the mind on such nights, for the Egyptian moon gives light enough to read the smallest print. After the long hot days of the noisy town, it is like another world to come out into the wide, silent spaces of the Egyptian desert and the silent company of the age-long dead.



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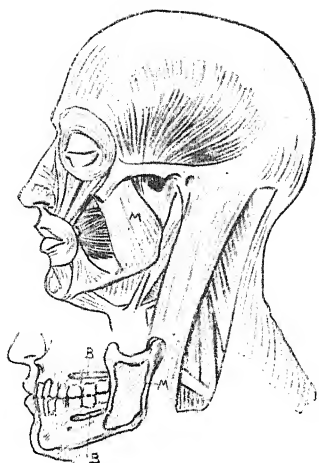
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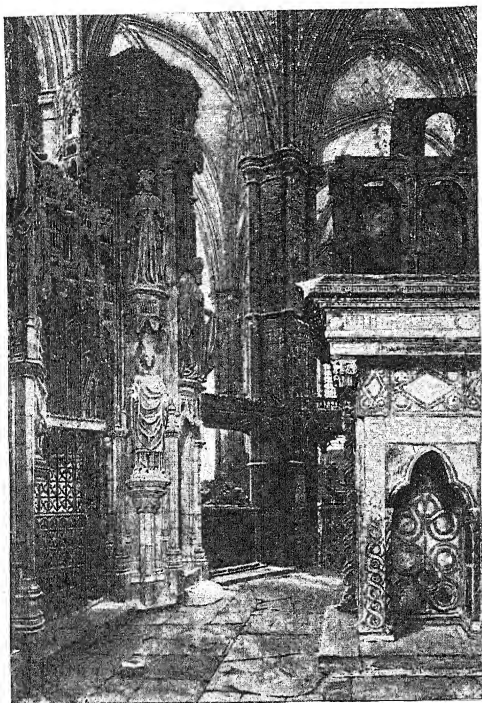
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